

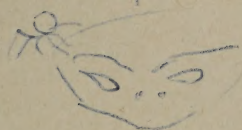
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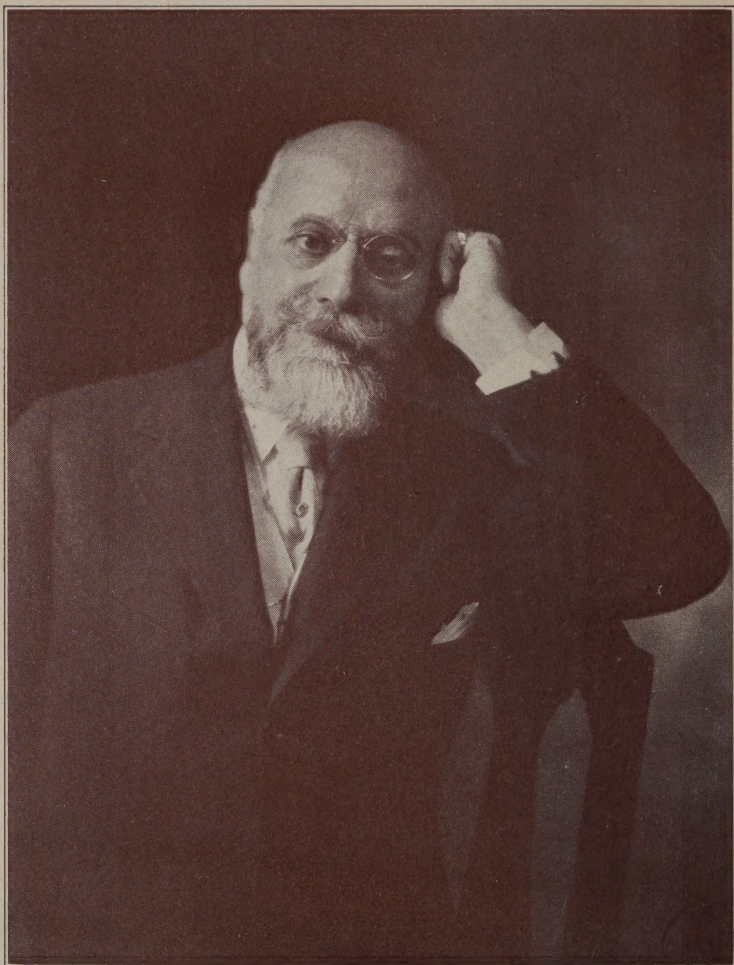
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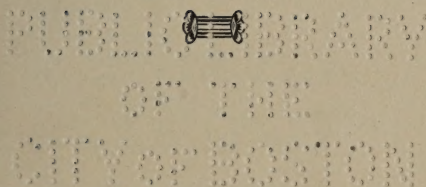
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HOW TO SUCCEED IN SINGING

BY
A. BUZZI-PECCIA

A Practical Guide for Singers Desiring
to Enter the Profession



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CONTENTS

PART I

	PAGE
I What the Public Thinks About Vocal Methods..	7
II The Old Italian Method.....	12
III Teaching the Italian Method to American Students	19
IV The Difference of Conception in Starting to Study. Between the American and European Pupil	22
V Vocalization	27
VI Books on Tone Production.....	30
VII Voice—Voice—Voice!	32
VIII The Modern Scientific Voice Makers.....	35
IX Imitation and Assimilation.....	37
X Artistic Emotion and Natural Emotion.....	39
XI Artificial Expression	41
XII How Artists Study.....	42
XIII Repertoire	43
XIV Light Opera or Musical Comedy Singers.....	45
XV Operatic and Concert Singers.....	47
XVI Concert Programs	49
XVII Good Opportunities and Bad Singing.....	54
XVIII Good Singing and Bad Opportunity.....	57
XIX Good Luck	59
XX The Evolution of the Pupil.....	61
XXI Stage Life	64
XXII Going Abroad	70
XXIII The Amateur Music Lover.....	78
XXIV The Accompanist for Students.....	79
XXV Artistic Business	81
XXVI About Telling the Truth to Students.....	83
XXVII The Ear Drum of the Singer.....	85
XXVIII Stars	88
XXIX The Public Theatre Goes.....	92
XXX The Scientific Method and the Egg.....	98
XXXI What Establishes the Reputation of a Vocal Teacher	102
XXXII The Scientific Singing of Great Artists.....	107
XXXIII Love of Art—The Inside of an Artistic Study...	111
XXXIV Selecting a Voice Teacher in a Distant City.....	114
XXXV The Gradual Development of a Pupil.....	118

CONTENTS

PART II

THE NATURAL LAWS OF THE MECHANISM OF THE HUMAN VOICE

	PAGE
XXXVI The Mechanism of the Human Voice.....	123
XXXVII Vocal Organs and Their Activities.....	126
XXXVIII The Larynx	127
XXXIX Sound and Voice.....	129
XL Breath	129
XLI Diaphragm	131
XLII Rhythmical Respiratory Gymnastics	133
XLIII Exercises for Breathing and Holding the Breath	134
XLIV Expansion and Holding.....	135
XLV About Mental Control of the Vocal Organs.....	136
XLVI About Passages, Registers.....	137
XLVII The Artistic Diction.....	139
XLVIII Correct and Incorrect Placement of Vowels.....	143
XLIX Exercises on Vowels.....	148
L Articulation of Consonants.....	150
LI Exercises for the Independent Articulation of Lips and Tongue.....	150
LII Exercises to Facilitate the Rolling of the R.....	152
LIII The Free Action of the Lips in the Labial Con- sonant M	152
LIV Explanation of the Three Exercises.....	155

To American Students

My dear Friends:

I come to you with this little book, stirring up good and bad things in vocal art: Methods, teachers, students, engagements, debuts, stage life and other features of the profession; in order to bring them under your observation.

I have taken for analysis and consideration those elements that form the basis of the vocal art, as an art, and all those elements that form the practical part of a lyric career, with some examples which have been gleaned from long and varied experience, and some truths which may prove helpful to those people who are planning to enter the world of the lyric art.

My best wishes, and good luck to all of you.

A. BUZZI-PECCIA

I

WHAT THE PUBLIC THINKS ABOUT VOCAL METHODS

That the Public, including the large army of vocal students, has not an exact idea of what a vocal method is and what a vocal teacher should be, is evident from the way everyone talks and argues on the subject. There are so many different and contradictory opinions that to decide which is the correct one is almost an impossibility.

There are people who assert and who believe that the art of singing is the simplest thing in the world. These expect a pupil to sing a song after having taken *a few lessons*. These same people, who would not expect a piano pupil to play a Chopin Ballade, a Beethoven Sonata, nor even a Sonatina by Mozart, or a Schumann composition, without *years* of preparation. Nor would they consent to have their pianos tuned by a tuner who had spent two or three days learning how.

On the contrary, other people believe that the art of singing is the most complicated thing on earth, a labyrinth of rules which no teacher could explain correctly because in order to do so, he should have to be a great artist, a great musician,

a physician, a scientist, a throat specialist, an expert in all the anatomical contractions of the vocal organs, muscles and ligaments of the human body, and a polyglot!

There is only one point on which both extremes agree, and that is, that "anyone is competent to judge." That is why, in vocal matters, there are so many advisors. (And such advisors!)

The gamut of their opinions ranges from the simplest ingenuity of a child to the incredible absurdities of the quack.

But how can the public have a clear idea regarding methods and teachers when there are statements, in the memoirs of certain celebrities, that give the impression that the vocal teacher is almost a secondary matter?

Some admit having studied with a teacher for a period, but claim that they knew how to sing before going to him. The teacher merely gave a little advice, and there the matter ended. A certain Prima Donna said she never studied. She just got up one fine morning and sang! Another gave recitals when six years of age; at twelve she brushed up a couple of scales; and at fifteen, appeared on the stage! When asked how she did it, she said, "It's very simple—merely listening and watching good artists—nothing else." This is what we might call the *Listening Method*. With this method, every usher at the Metropolitan Opera House should be a great artist!

But what about the great artists of the Golden Age of Song? Were they such stupid people that they needed so many years of study? Of course at that time the repertoire required an able vocalist; but to be an able vocalist nowadays would do no very great harm to the execution of modern operas, even though they are not of the coloratura style.

Speaking of coloraturas, have you ever noticed that the majority of coloratura sopranos state that they learned from the birds? How charming! It is really naive; but how poetically it reads!

A celebrated coloratura soprano tells, for instance, that she learned to sing while walking through the woods. In a short time she was able to sing, merely from listening to the birds! This is another method—the *Bird Vocal Method*!

I thought that only poets gave themselves up to listening to the birds; but I find there are some vocal teachers who from time to time advocate this natural and inexpensive method.

I must confess I have wandered through many woods and have heard birds *whistling* beautifully; but I have never heard a bird *sing an operatic aria*! Perhaps I wasn't in the right mood. But taking them at their word, I will say that sometimes coloratura sopranos succeed in imitating birds surprisingly well, when they deliver to the public a high D which is a perfect whistle and a *picchettato* which is a perfect imitation of the

cackling of a hen when she announces the laying of an egg.

Yet, the public seems much pleased with this style of imitation. The higher the whistle, the greater the applause. Musical art has made great progress in the past few years. The public, however, does not show much improvement in its taste, with regard to voices. It prefers a shrill high tone from a soprano to the velvety tone of a contralto. A bombastic high B from a tenor at the end of a song always stirs the audience.

Dogs are more sensitive in this respect. When they hear a high screaming tone, they react by starting to howl and moan. The public, on the other hand, can only think that he who is able to reach a high note is a wonder!

Because of this fact we have a mania among vocal students to reach high tones. It is really an obsession with nearly every student. When a pupil can scream a high C, he or she is happy, happy as a bird! Very often the pupil loses all the middle register by brutalizing the voice in this way. She cannot sing a sustained tone any more, but she is not worried as long as she can reach the canary C, the craze of the dear public.

Bassos, baritones and some tenori-robusti prefer to show the power of their voices by imitating other species of animals! By the way in which they sometimes roar their songs, it would seem that they had learned the art of *bel canto*, cross-

ing some African desert or visiting a zoological garden.

With all these imitations of nature to be had for the asking, in the turmoil of so many different natural and unnatural exhibitions of the art of singing, small wonder that the public has become confused about teachers and methods!

II

THE OLD ITALIAN METHOD

The fame of the old Italian method has come through the centuries in spite of the many new discoveries, theories, odd opinions and vocal devices which have been preached by the apostles of the modern vocal art, all over the world, and especially in the United States.

The splendid name of the old Italian school made its way without fighting. It came among the war of differing opinions like a white dove of peace. Its greatness lies in the simplicity of its means and in the naturalness of its concepts. Its prestige endures because of the great results obtained, because of the directness with which the right end is reached and because of the soundness of its technical and artistic foundation.

Its importance rests on its fine gradation of progressive study, that leads to the full knowledge and control of vocal emission, expression, flexibility and all the effects which the voice is called upon to perform. Thus the vocal, mental and latent artistic capabilities of the singer are unfolded and developed.

The old Italian method did not do a lot of boasting about anatomical knowledge, nor scien-

tific descriptions of muscular contractions of the vocal organs—for the simple reason that such knowledge is of no help to the pupil. It would only serve to confuse him and perhaps distract his artistic conception by conceiving the anatomical action of the vocal organs. Their action is only *consequence* and not *direct cause*.

The direct cause is the mind which conceives the tone. The vocal organs adjust themselves to perform the tone preconceived by the mind. The ear discovers whether the tone produced corresponds to the one preimagined by the mind; and that is all. We sing with the same set of vocal organs with which we speak. Speaking is normal, while singing is abnormal.

Everyone knows that the vocal organs are not voluntary muscles which can be trained separately. They only get into action by singing; so it is very easy to understand that opening the mouth, swelling or squeezing the diaphragm, raising or lowering the tongue and breathing in or exhaling the breath, without singing, would be like going through the motions of swimming out of water.

The simplicity of the old Italian method did not mean, however, ignorance or pedantry, as is so readily seen by the fact that the *best* of our modern singers cannot sing the scores of operas that a *commonplace* singer of other days could perform very easily. Today, when an old opera

is performed, the public is surprised if a tenor or soprano is able to sing scales or to sing with a pure, clear tone and charming melody. The public thinks that such an artist is a marvel; and yet the singer has merely studied by the simple old method.

Many students, in fact nearly all, ask to be taught by the old Italian method. To go back to the old Italian method one must go back to the old school of vocal teachers, who devoted their whole lives and souls to the art of teaching.

Nowadays who is not a vocal teacher? They spring up faster than mushrooms on a rainy day. Some are good, honest, experienced teachers who can give valuable advice; but unfortunately the greater number are self-appointed. They became vocal masters either for the reason that they could do nothing else, that they did not make enough money in their own professions, or for some unknown reason which has nothing to do with the beautiful art of singing.

Really, it does not require a great deal to become a voice teacher of such calibre. A nice studio, one piano, a permanent encouraging smile, an accompanist, some good advertising, some good pupil from another teacher, friends who help, some student who believes, and there you have a vocal teacher.

From time to time we read in the papers of people who wish to have these vocal teachers

examined. It would be a very good thing if it were possible; but at the present time, with the chaos of different opinions, personal views of singers, musicians, doctors, and so on, each claiming the superiority of his own method such an examination would be an impossibility. The fakes have more nerve than the real teachers; and these fakes are great fighters. So most likely the poor committee would find itself in such a raging sea of discussion and dispute that it would consider itself fortunate to come out alive.

In the olden days vocal teachers were not so numerous and were considered a highly respectable class of artists, honored by Kings, Emperors and the highest personalities. Nowadays, things have changed considerably.

The modern pupil, too, is different from the old one. He has not the same enthusiasm, the same love for real study. He has the ambition to succeed, but not the perseverance to pursue the road to success. Moreover he lives in an entirely different social atmosphere. The student of other days belonged to a class apart, removed from social life. Today the pupil's time is divided amongst his studies, friendships, good times and all the distractions of social functions. He does not have the advantage of good art discussions (to talk seriously at parties is taboo) and the subject of art and artists becomes mere patter. The pupil who is told he must give up his round

of gaieties feels that it is too great a sacrifice. The way is long, the enthusiasm short and perseverance dwindles little by little.

Then, too, there are all those who change teachers every six weeks (changing teachers seems to be a specialty of vocal students) and those people who go from one studio to another singing for teachers just for pastime or merely out of curiosity. They have not the least idea of taking lessons; but they like to talk to different vocal teachers. They go from one teacher to another, collecting opinions, rules, advice and so on. Then they go home and study by themselves, or perhaps with an accompanist. They think they are very clever in doing this, but they are not!

Then, too, there is the lamentable student who can never find a satisfactory teacher for his wonderful talent.

Vocal students are never quite sure of what they are doing. They are always inquiring, asking everyone's opinion; they are nearly always in the air.

But the *self-called* wonderful pupil (who never succeeds) is the worst of all. He belongs to a class of people, half-students, half-singers, who would like to sing but never find a vocal master to their liking. What this class wants is a teacher who will tell them *what they think they are* and *not what they really are!* They ask for the truth; but they hate to listen to it. They prefer

being deceived. Their vanity is stronger than their reason. It is this class of people that produces the unscrupulous teachers and fakes. The bigger the bluff, the more the pupils believe in it. One may say that a bluffer does not last very long. That is true; but if it were not for this class of pupil, *he would not even exist!*

Many students complain that they cannot study because of the lack of artistic atmosphere in this country. While there are many American students who go abroad to find the artistic atmosphere in some boarding house or "au clair de la lune," there are some eminent artists who come from abroad to sing and teach in the American artistic atmosphere. This tends to prove that when there is a truly artistic soul and a well-balanced mind, one can find the artistic atmosphere in any part of the world.

But one must confess that the pupil of today studies under some disadvantages. The public expects too much from a young singer. Relatives want him to succeed quickly; so the pupil feels that he must study in a hurry. This, of course, cannot be done. The old teacher says that, in the art of singing, "*He who wants to succeed quickly—has to go slowly*"; and it is true.

The development of a voice is very slow, because of the many things that have to do with it and are bound up in it. The voice itself, the mental state, the spiritual condition, the health

of the pupil, subconscious tendencies and reactions: all these are reflected in the voice of the pupil and affect favorably or unfavorably his vocal progress.

The old vocal teacher and student used to work with a calm spirit of research and improvement. The student knew that he would have to stay with his teacher for at least four or five years before he could be considered ready. The vocal teacher having a class of pupils for five years was not in a hurry to look for other pupils. He was working patiently, easily, with no need of advertisement, no worry and no contention. All colleagues were good friends; they respected each other.

The *debut* of one of the pupils was a cheerful event, not a feast of criticism. Every teacher had his own pupils, and there was no need of pupil endorsements, that bone of contention of modern teachers. At the present time the public quarrels, when teachers claim each other's successful pupils, is indeed a sad spectacle.

Lamentable, too, is the pandemonium of thousands of artists and students coming, going, tossing each other about, always trying to come out first. *The more they hurry, the less they succeed, because one of the worst enemies of the vocal student is the unrest of the mind.*

Thus, with the modern student, it is obvious that the old peaceful regular study cannot be realized.

III

TEACHING THE ITALIAN METHOD TO AMERICAN STUDENTS

It would be wrong to say that the Italian method can be taught to American pupils in the same way in which it is taught to an Italian student, not because of the difference in musical aptitude or capability, but on account of the vast difference in the languages they speak.

The Italian language is spoken by every Italian, in the nasal cavity, without the least preoccupation or thought of direction and without any effort to support the voice in that place. Each one of the five vowels—A, E, I, O, U—has the resonance in the nasal cavity and is emitted with a very slight modification of shape in passing from one to the other. Consequently, the consonants that are to be connected with the vowels reach the same place. The articulation of the consonants is performed by the lips and tongue in such a way that the sound is helped to go in front, *leaving the lower part of the mouth (the jaw) entirely free and relaxed*, which is one of the greatest advantages a singer can have. *It gives freedom of tone production, expression, and makes the diction more easy and effective.* In this way the

singer gets the maximum effect with the minimum effort.

The American student has difficulty in carrying the voice to the front, on account of his nasal or guttural way of speaking, bad habits in articulation of consonants and mumbling of vowels.

Vowels in English are not in the mask. They are not clean, pure, steady vowels, but mixed vowels. The passage from one vowel to another requires much more motion of chin and lips than the Italian vowels. The voice always has the tendency to fall back; and to keep it in front requires more intensity of breath support and muscular tension.

The stiff jaw is one of the principal troubles among American pupils, a trouble which causes many other inconveniences in singing. Stiffening the jaw prevents freedom of breath control (the gradual action of the breath, increasing, relaxing and shading the tone). In some cases the breath gets away and is exhausted after a few tones, and then the voice must depend upon muscular effort for support. Again, in the effort of holding a tone, the stiff jaw interferes with the action of the breath in such a way that the singer suffers from diaphragmatic contraction (sometimes very painfully), having a feeling of emptiness while he still has plenty of breath.

From all this it is easy to understand that to correct these faults and to put the American on

the same footing as the Italian pupil, one must start in a different way to reach the point. To begin, for instance, with an open Italian A, would be a great mistake and would not give good results. The Italian A is different from the English A, and so is the O, which the English form by pulling out the lips, while the Italian only rounds his mouth. The English have not the dark Italian E, in their language; they have an open E, which is very far back. E is either guttural or too nasal. It gives a nasal tone that some pupils confound with the voice in the nasal cavity; but the two are entirely different things. However, these troubles, which seem so numerous, can be corrected easily by intelligent, systematic, technical and artistic training.

IV

THE DIFFERENCE OF CONCEPTION IN STARTING TO STUDY BETWEEN THE AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN PUPIL

The difference in the attitude of the pupil in the school makes a great difference in teaching and learning. While apparently there is no difference in the attitude towards the school and teacher, between the American and European pupil, in reality there is a substantially great one, the points of view being almost diametrically opposite.

When a European pupil starts to study he goes before the teacher and *sings*. No matter how badly or with how many faults in his production, he sings, according to his own impulse, his natural conception. He sings freely, without any suggested preconception. His voice comes out, showing all its good and bad points, the pupil's right or wrong conception. The teacher can at once see his way clearly and so have a much better and decisive judgment about everything concerning the pupil's capabilities. He can then formulate his plans for the pupil's individual instruction, the teaching becomes simpler, correcting the pupil gradually until he reaches the point

of artistic training. Correcting the pupil while he sings with his own natural initiative makes the task of the teacher much easier, because the artistic personality of the pupil can be detected and developed without hesitation and the results are quicker and more satisfactory. This can be easily understood.

In America, on the contrary, when the pupil begins his studies, he stands before the teacher and asks what he should do. He wants the technical explanation of the Art of Singing, the rules of its foundation, instead of singing according to his own impulse. The vocal teacher, who is considered a *Well of Vocal Science*, has to give all the general rules, anatomical explanations, description of the action of the vocal organs, and so forth, besides practical examples of how to stand, to open the mouth, to lower the tongue, to expand the diaphragm, to relax the jaw, and other details.

When the pupil is well filled up with all these technical and scientific explanations, he starts to sing. However, he no longer sings with any degree of freedom or his own natural impulse. He sings under an artificial conception and some eventual suggestion from the teacher. His personality and the quality of voice almost disappear, suffocated, as it were, by this multitude of given rules to remember and to put into action while singing. The teacher has a very difficult task

finding out whether the faults are due to the voice or to a misunderstanding of some given rule.

The voice, under these conditions of the mental state, when emitted is very difficult to train, and its real quality much more so to discover. This is one of the principal reasons pupils change teachers and the manner of singing so often; also why the quality undergoes so many changes. After several changes of method, they are completely at sea and do not know which is the true quality of their voices.

Singing under continuous suggestion, the student never develops the ability to use his own mind. He sings well when at the studio and gets lost when left alone. Another strange but quite frequent result of not singing freely and always striving to sing by suggested rules is that the pupil, who before studying sang some little songs or melodies with a charming tone quality, cannot find the same quality when he tries to sing according to technical rules.

One important point, that should be understood clearly, is that *the school is the place where the student gets the IDEA which he must work out alone—at home. The improvement must come from his own mind!* It would seem that everyone does study in that way, but in reality it is far from so.

The majority of pupils believe that, when they have a competent teacher, all they have to do is

to go to the studio and study there. The teacher is the one who must do all the thinking, find out all the faults and the manner of correcting them. They do not seem to understand that *the teacher is the guide who gives them the points, but that the pupil is the one who must think them out and develop them for himself*. There is no one else who can do this for him. The same thing applies to every line of endeavor. If the teacher could do everything, it would be ideally easy work for the ambitious pupil. Unfortunately, however, the pupil must be a very valuable co-operator with the teacher and use his own mind, if he wishes to succeed. Otherwise, there is no chance for him.

Of course I refer to the average pupil. If I should attempt to go into detail regarding the different kinds of pupils, their various opinions and manners of studying, it would fill many volumes. Even then one would not have a complete collection.

There is the pupil who thinks he has had a bad lesson when a conscientious teacher corrects him over and over again, on some point which he cannot understand. This type of pupil is usually happy when he finds a teacher who does not pay any attention to his faults but praises everything he does. Then there is the student who at every lesson has a new idea—picked up from some friend or book. Next is the one who thinks he knows all there is to know and who bitterly re-

sents correction. Others want to accomplish everything, to correct faults they have had for years, in ten or twelve lessons. Others study tone production at the studio, grand opera at home, cabaret songs for their friends, and give a few lessons and a lot of advice to other students, as a side issue. Then there are those who go to the studio as they go to church, once a week, then close the book when they come out, for another week. Others, but I am not writing a volume on this one subject—so “au revoir.”

V

VOCALIZATION

Technical, artistic vocalization means a study which combines the two elements, technique and artistry.

A great number of pupils consider the foundation of the art of singing only from the technical point of view. Others go through their daily exercises with the sentiment of accomplishing a duty, because they have to and not because they like to do it. They consider the time spent in doing exercises, almost wasted. For them, the real study begins from the day they start to sing a song. But alas! the student who thinks exercises unnecessary trouble is very much to be pitied, for he will study all his life without accomplishing anything.

No less to be pitied is the one who believes only in technical tone production. He makes a great mistake, because the technical conception of the tone production paralyzes the artistic conception of it and deprives the voice of its natural feeling by substituting an artificial one. In a word, we lose the individuality of the voice. The pupil who performs exercises without an artistic feeling, is

one who has not the true love for the study of beautifying the voice.

Some people say, "How can people put any artistic feeling into scales, arpeggios, octaves, trills, gruppetti, sustained tones, etc.?" They do not realize that every one of these exercises has its special character responding to a special purpose and requires a special feeling in vocal execution. *All these exercises are nothing but the very things one needs in order to sing songs. They are the technical, artistic necessities of the singer.*

The pupil who believes only in technical research for tone production will study all his life without understanding why his voice has no charm, no color and sounds monotonous. He does not understand that his voice is lacking the principal factors of quality and expression, the light of an artistic conception. His face has no expression; he has only a studied pose which does not appeal, only hinders, and even destroys personal attraction.

Every pupil should be in love with his vocalization! Instead of going through his daily exercises like a machine, without any artistic feeling, he should put his soul and mind to it.

To train the pupil in all the effects of vocalization was the way the old masters used to teach. They did not let the pupil have a song until he was ready for it.

Nowadays, there are scores of students who have studied for years and are not able to sing a single scale correctly; but they know by memory songs and operas, which they sing; that is, which they pretend to sing. They go around singing the same arias for years. They grow old, the scores grow old with them, they fall to pieces with all their dog-ear marks, cadenzas and dirt, while the pupils remain always at the same stage of their careers, eternal beginners!

VI

BOOKS ON TONE PRODUCTION

There are many and sometimes very good books written on the Art of Singing and on Tone Production. They are valuable for some things and should be read by teachers. I should not advise a young student to read them, however, because he cannot understand them. Neither do I advise teachers to use them as texts nor as unvarying examples of correct procedure. There can be no fixed rules, because there are no two pupils who can be taught exactly alike, in the whole world. The book can give a rule, but cannot give the thousand details on adapting the same rule to different pupils, each possessing different vocal capabilities, mental conceptions and physical strength.

The thousand shadings of different ways to apply a rule make the great difficulty in teaching. It is in the suitableness and efficaciousness of these adaptations that the competence and cleverness of a vocal teacher are shown. The teacher must find the way to fit the rule to the pupil's individuality. It is the shoe that must

fit the foot and not the foot that must fit the shoe. Sometimes a little fault compels the teacher to change his way of training a pupil. As it often happens in a game of chess—a little move changes the whole programme of a play.

VII

VOICE—VOICE—VOICE!

When "Papa" Rossini launched his great motto, "He who wants to be a singer must possess three things; Voice—Voice—Voice!" everyone was astonished by the profound sentence, the great truth—which included in one word all the art of singing.

I believe that the great master, who possessed a tremendous sense of humor, meant it ironically, for that part of the public which cares only for *Voice*, that is, for the Instrument itself and not for the artistic playing on it. It must be so, otherwise the great master would have only explained a material necessity, which is common to all kinds of art.

No one would be amazed or surprised to hear that a dancer must possess Legs, Legs, Legs (Pardon, only two are necessary, so I take one back.); that a pianist needs a *Piano* to play on and a cook needs a chicken if he wishes to prepare a chicken a la grille. The impression that the modulation of the voice is a phenomenal thing apart from the skill or the artistic culture of the singer, makes him think that *Voice is Everything!* This impression is still general, after centuries.

In fact, everyone who has the ambition of becoming a singer always asks if *his voice* is good enough to be cultivated (which is very reasonable); but he *never inquires* about all the other musical talents he should possess, to become a successful singer. He never stops to think that the *Voice* is the *Instrument* which *transmits the artistic soul of the singer*, his technical skill, his magnetic personal power. When the Voice has nothing to transmit except the material resonance, the voice becomes a monotonous thing even though of natural good quality.

A Stradivarius played by a bad violinist will lose all its charm of tone; while a poor violin played by a great artist, will sound beautiful in his hands. The poor violin may be compared to a passably good voice when illumined by the soul-poetry of a real artist.

“Artists Born” are those who have the *artistic soul which makes the voice an instrument of emotion*, the real love, the poetry of the art, the real vocation. *Then comes the voice, the exponent of all these artistic qualities.*

The common belief that every good voice can make a fine artist brings the result that the good voices are many, the fine artists few. Many students have good voices, sometimes unusually good ones. They go on splendidly as long as they are trained for vocalization, but often fall flat when asked to express dramatic sentiment or

when artistic diction is demanded, or a deep interpretation of a poem. Then the voice of good material stops and is unable to cross the bridge of real art. It becomes stagnant, only suitable for a certain type of song demanding sonority and not artistic refinement.

One may say that there is still a great part of the public that cares *only* for *voice*; better say, for *noise*! But the noisy singer doesn't last very long. He usually comes up quickly, but he disappears just as quickly.

The belief that the voice is the only factor in singing has brought, as a natural consequence, the idea that a vocal teacher need not be a musician. Some go so far, on this subject, as to say that one can learn by the description of the motion of the vocal organs (according to which theory any throat specialist or surgeon can be a vocal master). They claim that the *science* has to take the place of the old *empirisme*; but all in all it seems (if one looks at the results) that the scientific singing is not any better than the old *empirisme* (which after all gave to the world many great artists and many great vocalists—who are lost to this generation).

VIII

THE MODERN SCIENTIFIC VOICE MAKERS

The scientific teaching comes from the very uncertain standing of the vocal teacher as an artistic or technical authority. It is with great regret (in regard to many professionals who deserve all respect and credit for their artistic work) that one must admit that in reality a vocal teacher has no definite professional standing—outside the fact that he is teaching vocal students. His professional standing before the public is not clear. The vocal teacher is a self-appointed master. So it has been through the ages and so it is nowadays, in spite of all the supposed progress and all the discussions of vocal training. The obscurity of the origin of a great part of the vocal teachers makes the public uncertain about their authenticity.

When Rossini said “Voice—Voice—Voice,” he certainly meant to say *natural voice*, not the artificial noises that are often made. Nowadays a natural voice seems to be almost a secondary consideration, because the modern vocal scientists claim that they are able to give to everyone not only *voice, voice, voice*, but also the *kind* of voice

the student wishes to have—a Caruso, a Melba, a Patti voice! All the student has to do is to choose the kind he desires!

The *Scientific Methods* used by all these voice givers are many and of a great variety.

By all these beautiful methods one would believe that good voices could be produced to such a prolific extent as to shame the rabbits. As a matter of fact one can hear Voice—Voice—Voice all around; but I do not believe that “Papa” Rossini would stick to his motto if he were living in the present vocal era.

IX

IMITATION AND ASSIMILATION

A large majority of vocal students have the ingenuity to imitate the vocal emission, special effects and even the motion of lips and body, of some great artist.

Imitation is a very poor form of art. It means lack of artistic initiative and personality. They do not understand that the vocal artistic effects are personal specialties of each particular singer and cannot be imitated.

There are many singers who have lost their own personality by imitating other singers' specialties in vocal emission or in interpretation of songs. *The singer should understand that the mechanical imitation is of no use* and that teachers should not impose their own vocal emission on their pupils.

As a matter of fact, the vocal masters who produced the greatest celebrities were not singers themselves. Beginning with Muzio, Pacchierotti, Porpora, down to Leoni, San Giovanni and the celebrated Lampertis (father and son), we find that not one of these ever sang; yet they gave to the world its greatest singers! Moreover were the exact imitation of vocal emission *desir-*

able, it would not prove *practicable*. What kind of an example could a tenor, even with a Caruso voice, give to a coloratura soprano, a basso to a tenor and vice versa!

Teachers who have not been gifted with a golden voice by God—or the throat of a canary—are saying a good deal, when they claim that the only way for a pupil to learn is by imitating their way of singing. The only way to get some advantage from listening to or studying with great artists, is to assimilate, if possible, their artistic conception as expressed by their vocal effects, and to realize how they have adapted these effects to their own individual talent and capacity, by an artistic evolution. But to do this takes a clever mind. All great artists assimilate each other's best points; and yet no two sing alike. If they imitated these mechanically, instead of assimilating them individually, they would all sing alike, thereby losing their greatest charm, *their own personality*.

X

ARTISTIC EMOTION AND NATURAL EMOTION

Not many people realize the psychological difference between natural emotion and artistic emotion, nor which of the two an artist should feel in singing and acting.

The natural emotion is the direct impression of a real fact. *The artistic emotion is a suggestive impression of an imagined fact. The artistic emotion is the essence of sentiment.* An artist is an auto-suggested person who communicates his emotions to others. The essence of sentiment is the mysterious language of nature.

A painter who only copies waves and trees, without the expression of their sentiment, is not an artist; he is merely a material reproducer of trees and waves, but not of the sentiment of nature itself. A singer who only emits tones correctly is a vocalist, perhaps a good singer, but not an artist. *The real artist gives that intangible but supreme emotion by suggesting and projecting the imagined experience.*

Everything on the stage is suggested and suggestive. The public would not stand for reality. That is why you see refined ladies enjoying the

sight of *Otello* suffocating poor *Desdemona*, *Cavaradossi* shot down before their very eyes and *Mimi* dying of consumption. Religious people even applaud the *Devil* when he sings a good song. The public would not stand for many of the love duos, were they not idealized. They do not see in *Faust* and *Marguerite* a couple of sweethearts but only the essence of the sentiment of eternal love and innocence. The presence of the evoked sentiment dissipates the realism and preserves for the audience the emotion and idea of which the action is but the symbol. *Thus it is most important for the actor or singer to feel all passion artistically and not realistically.* If a singer should really get angry or exhausted, he could not sing, for the reason that every little emotion affects the voice and its control. Laughter, anger, passion, joy, sorrow and all the lesser emotions of regret, chagrin, and so on affect the voice in countless ways and in varying degrees. The artist must be under perfect control both physically and mentally. He has to be very alert in keeping track of what he is doing and what is to come. He must prepare for hard passages that are coming. The artistic emotion however does not affect the voice; on the contrary, it helps it, gives it character, expression and power.

XI

ARTIFICIAL EXPRESSION

People who are lacking in artistic initiative and suggestive imagination often try to express sentiment by artificial means such as mechanical gestures, calculated pauses and superimposed facial expression. These people can arrive at a certain point of histrionism but never can give any emotion to the public. Technique is a means to accomplish dramatic effects; but it must be an artistic technique, not a theoretical one (which conceals art).

The artist must sing and act with such ease as to make the audience believe it to be spontaneous and perfectly natural. There is nothing more painful than an artist who shows technical effort in his work. *Between a perfect technique and an artist with some technical faults, but at the same time a natural expression of emotion, the public will always prefer the latter, because he gives something to the audience. He gives a part of himself.* The other gives only an illustration of some good theories; and the public does not care much for theory.

XII

HOW ARTISTS STUDY

I wish that pupils might hear how *artists study their rôles, going over them phrase by phrase, word by word, hundreds of times, until they perfect them.* How they take every possible chance, calculating every little dramatic or vocal effect, in breathing, resting, accent, preparation of tone, facial expression, pose of the body, and many other details. How they render the work in the most artistic way with regard to the style of the music, the meaning of the words, the impersonation of the characters and at the same time adapt the phrasing and musical effects to their own voices.

How different with the great average of pupils who learn the tunes and the words, brush up a bit to be sure of them, and think then that they are through with it. Completely satisfied, they look for some other song or turn to another opera score.

XIII

REPERTOIRE

When the pupil is ready for the study of repertoire the best way to start is to begin with the classics of all schools, Italian, German, English, French. The study of the classics is the most suitable for all vocal effects, diction and interpretation, on account of the purity of the melodies, clearness of style, and the beautiful setting of words to music. The classic music is the happy combination of vocalization, diction and dramatic effects. It is the way to the more advanced and modern school.

If a pupil needs an operatic repertoire, he should begin with operas of the old school. The composer of that time used to write for the singer. Now, with the evolution of the lyric drama, the conception of the composer has changed a great deal. He writes with the conception of a complex effect—orchestral, scenic and vocal combined—giving an unique result.

While the singer is the principal figure on the stage, he is no longer the principal factor vocally; he is but one part of a complex whole. We notice the same evolution in chamber music. In certain songs the accompaniment is the principal part,

while the singer merely sings intervals in harmonic relation to the accompaniment, but no melodious lines. It is a kind of melopea, a recitative which serves more as an explanation of the descriptive motion of the accompaniment than as the rendering of the lyrical idea by a characteristic melody.

These songs of modern composition require the refined art of a finished singer to bring out their effects. That is why they are not advisable for beginners as a first step. It is even more harmful to the voice to attempt to sing modern operas when a pupil is not ready for them.

It is a pity that so often one hears pupils, who can hardly sing a simple song, trying to sing big operatic arias. They impose upon their friends, not only the crucial pain of listening but also the ordeal of having to congratulate them upon their fine rendering and beautiful voices. These poor pupils live in the delusion of being ready for a debut and cannot understand why they do not get engagements.

XIV

LIGHT OPERA OR MUSICAL COMEDY SINGERS

The general idea students have about singing in musical comedy is that one who has not enough voice or vocal culture for singing in grand opera or concert is more than good enough for musical comedy.

One hears pupils say, "If I don't succeed in grand opera I will go into musical comedy." They think that is so easy, that being a light opera singer is so simple, that it requires very little talent or study.

It does not require the same histrionic abilities necessary for grand opera, but some others not less important and sometimes hard to find in one person. The light opera artist must possess three marked talents—if not exceptional ones, at least good; as a singer; as a comedian; as a dancer.

It is easier to be sad than brilliant on the stage. It is not so very easy to pass smoothly and beautifully from the speaking voice to the singing voice, back and forth throughout the piece and to dance while doing so.

How many prima donnas can dance in certain operas? Very few. And when they dance, how

they do it! Besides, the light opera singer must always be of prepossessing appearance, with a beautiful figure and other attractions. As a rule we do not see in light opera a respectable lady of forty years playing the part of a Butterfly of sweet sixteen, or a three hundred pound *Mimi* dying of consumption.

As for the work, the light opera singer must sing once every day and sometimes twice. She does not sing a part like *Isolde* or *Tosca*; but she gets tired just the same when going through all her talking, singing and dancing.

XV

OPERATIC AND CONCERT SINGERS

The operatic singer has three great factors to help him. The costume helps to suggest the character and to impress that suggestion on the audience. The scenery, with its atmosphere, helps to imbue the artist with the spirit of his character and suggests his reactions to his environment. The orchestra with its variety of tonal color creates, supports and sustains the mood throughout the piece and is therefore of great help to the singer.

The operatic singer has all these advantages over the concert singer; but he must possess some qualities other than the concert artist; for instance, a special histrionic talent. There are those who are great artists on the operatic stage and only mediocre singers on the concert stage where there is no background of orchestra or setting to support them. The concert singer does not conceal his identity beneath a cloak of some romantic period. He is himself. His concern is the beautiful rendition of different songs, each a complete expressive unit in itself, the perfect interpretation of the poetry, the subtleties of musical shadings and phrasings. In opera we

have the broad play of expression, in concert a finer and more delicate concentration.

Opera is the big picture of human sentiment; concert is the miniature. It goes without saying that an operatic student must be trained differently than the aspirant for the concert stage.

Carrying power and endurance are absolute essentials of the voice for operatic use. Declamatory emphasis which would be out of place in a song recital is necessary in all operatic performances, even in operas which are not very dramatic. *The singer must possess great physical endurance and vitality, in order to withstand the wear and tear of excitement of operas like "Carmen," "Samson et Delila," "Aida," and "Tristan and Isolde."* A concert singer can give a recital of twenty songs and gratify the public with several encores, without feeling one-third the physical exhaustion of a singer who has given an operatic performance.

The voice of an opera singer must develop in its full range, for he needs it. The operatic scores demand all his vocal resources, to the fullest extent of the singer's powers. Sometimes, too, the composer overtaxes the voice on its extreme upper tones or on the extreme lower ones. A concert singer can easily transpose songs suiting him, to the limitations of his voice. *The opera singer must be born with histrionic talent. The concert singer can be artistically made.*

XVI

CONCERT PROGRAMS

To make a programme is not an easy matter, especially in a country where concerts are so numerous and valuable new songs, which please the public, comparatively scarce. That is why the singer reverts to the unescapable traditional arrangements of songs, grouped systematically according to periods and composers. It reminds one of a traditional, formal dinner, where one always finds the classic *hors d'oeuvre*, the French soup, the German roast, the Russian salad, the English pudding and Italian wine. A Tosti song in a formal recital would be like a dish of spaghetti at a formal dinner; an operatic aria, a *capon a la bourgeoise*. The public would like it better; but the musical "*cordon bleu*" would be horrified. The coloratura arias are tolerated, they represent the bonbons and pastilles de menthe, while folk songs represent fresh vegetables.

Folk songs are always welcome in concert—folk songs of all nations, arranged by some musician, who is clever enough to solve the problem of being a successful composer without composing. The public likes folk songs, even in languages they

do not understand; because these songs so often have characteristic rhythm and melody which cannot be found in other songs.

Concert singers are very much afraid to try new songs, even though the composition be good, if the composer is not well known. They consider it a great risk and usually prefer an insignificant song written by an *auteur à la mode*. At least they count on making a good showing on the programme. But a good musician should not be confounded with the vast numbers of poor composers who are more prolific than rabbits.

The overwhelming production of poor compositions is mostly due to the fact that the average person is fond of songs with cheap sentiment. That is why there are so many heartbroken, soul-weary, faded roses, days-gone-by effusions, and that host of songs on "You" which form the special delight of so many amateurs and the vaudeville public. Songs of "You" are published by thousands; "You," "To You," "Just You," "For You," "With You," "It Is You," "Just for You," "Because of You," "Thinking of You," "Looking at You," "Nothing but You," *ad infinitum*.

It seems that the majority of people as well as publishers do not care much for the better class of poetry and a higher musical standard. In fact it happens that one recognizes in many of the new songs familiar tunes which have pleased in

the past. The composers do not even take the trouble to change or disguise it in any way. One is inclined to believe that the composer and the publisher were afraid to change it too much for fear it might be spoiled in the process and so lose its popularity. How the public enjoys hearing their familiar pet tunes!

Then, too, these songs are thrown in with some good ones without discrimination and sent to the singer for selection. The singer soon grows tired of trying them over and throws them all into the waste basket; or else she goes through them in such a way that the basket would be preferable as a more noble death for the good ones.

It would take too long to describe the martyrological journey of a new song from the publisher to the basket; passing through the artistic taste of a singer, the opinion of his family, the examination of some friend who has a couple of unpublished songs of his own in his pocket, the pity of some great artist who listens to the song as to a useless noise, the criticism of an accompanist who thinks that he is the only one who can write a decent song, and so on.

But all this criticism is the natural result when an artist submits his work to someone else for judgment. He puts himself in an unfavorable artistic position. The one who is asked to give judgment becomes, consequently, very important, a superior critic and a very difficult one and still

more difficult if, besides giving his opinion about the song, he is asked the great favor of singing it.

When a song comes from abroad the singer does not feel responsible for the merit or absence of merit in a song, and the situation therefore is a different one. The composer from abroad does not even know who is going to sing his song. He does not need to present his song to an artist, with letters which are systematically ignored by the recipient. He does not care if a singer in this country likes his songs or not. He is independent, so the star comes down from the sky and becomes a regular singer who needs some new songs for his programme. The singer himself goes to the music stores, looks over scores of songs, and is very happy to find one which he thinks will suit his style. He seeks with a feeling of benevolent research and with more consideration and respect for the composers.

This difference of feeling is due to the fact that the song from abroad has already been accepted by the public and the singer, as has already been said, does not feel the responsibility of bringing it out to the public. Thus, even if the song proves to be a failure, his having selected it raises no protest from all the other composers who have not been favored by the artist.

Singers are very fond of having songs dedicated to them; but the curious thing about this is that the favored one sings the song perhaps a

couple of times, as a favor to the composer, and then that is all. Another Waterloo awaits the poor composer who has been so rash as to dedicate a song. Once having written it for a certain artist, he finds that the others do not want to sing it; so the poor composer suffers in either case.

XVII

GOOD OPPORTUNITIES AND BAD SINGING

I often wonder what kind of an idea some vocal students have about making a debut or singing for a manager. It seems that they do not realize what it means. It is hard to tell whether they take it as a chance, an amusement, or what! At any rate I do not think they take it seriously. If they could only understand what the first step of an artistic career means, the importance of it, they would not take it so lightly nor so foolishly.

I have often attended the hearings at the Metropolitan Opera House and at concert managers. I confess that I have always been surprised at the assurance with which so many pupils try out for engagements, when they do not come up in the least to requirements.

Is it the fault of the singer, of the teacher, or of the student's relatives who wish him to sing? I do not know. I know that a capable student, who has good training and can really be considered for an engagement, is very rare indeed. Every time I happen to be present at one of these hearings I wonder why they come. If they do it for fun, then it is poor fun indeed; much of it is disgraceful.

The most astonishing thing is to see these people looking so happy and proud of themselves, after they have been told to come back in a couple of years when *they know how to sing better*. They go home saying "I sang for Signor Gatti-Casazza." All the relatives are delighted. "She sang at the Metropolitan. Of course, they do not engage her, because they have Farrar, Hempel, and we have no big pull."

When they are asked why they sing, knowing that they are not ready to do so, they answer, "To get a chance." "A chance of what?" I say. "Do you call it a chance to have Mr. Gatti-Casazza, or a manager, tell you to come back in a couple of years when, perhaps, you may sing better?" I consider it a bad chance. Even if you are half good, it is not a chance, because the first impression is the one that remains. So this is the students' idea of what a hearing for a debut is. They believe it to be a question of chance, opportunity, and not ability. Moreover, the chances of the few good singers are spoiled by this procedure. So much bad singing makes the manager tired and disgusted with listening to any more. That is easy to understand when one realizes that those ill-trained or untrained students are legion, and that they go from one place to another, from hearing to hearing, from competition to competition. They are really a Damnation Army. Not only are they blinded by

self-vanity or by paternal love, but they must also be deaf to the sound of their own voices.

When we consider the great number of opera schools offering stage training, the host of teachers of acting, the overwhelming crowd of private teachers, coaching in repertoire for grand opera and for concert, and then think of their results in these competitive hearings, one is bound to ask whose fault it is, and what the reason is. Is it because of poor systems, no good scholars, good will but no perseverance or experience? Who knows? I suppose we must wait like the poet Heine who asked the stars why they twinkle, and said that a fool is still awaiting the answer. So are we.

XVIII

GOOD SINGING AND BAD OPPORTUNITY

Very often a good singer misses success, because of having been given an opportunity to sing under unfavorable circumstances. He is asked to sing a song which throws his shortcomings into strong relief, or to sing before an unfriendly, cold audience, or a disappointed one. The good luck is to sing for a manager who needs the singer for some particular work, no matter how little, which fits the singer. A great many times a singer sings for someone who needs him not at all; and the result, of course, is always negative. The manager is very indifferent—he is listening because he is obliged to, perhaps for the sake of some influential friend.

To sing to an indifferent listener is to sing under a great disadvantage; and especially is this so in the case of a good singer. So it is, for instance, at these general hearings where the singers are pushed out one after the other like cattle, to sing a couple of songs. It is like turning a talking machine. I rather call these hearings capital executions. The poor singer, especially the beginner, feels uneasy and not in an artistic mood. He fears the criticism, the terrible

verdict, that cold "Thank You" which is the *pollice versus* of the managers. The poor singer is nervous, he waits in the hope—not a very humane one—that all the others will be bad. At the same time, he fears that someone will be better than himself.

Hearings for engagements have always been a dream of hope and nightmare for singers—a great bore for managers, who have to listen to hundreds of singers for whom they have no use—and a great trouble to them when they have to decide about one artist whom they really need.

Everybody would be so happy to do without hearings; but, bad though they are, they are a cruel necessity. They cannot be helped. It is fated that one must sing and the other has to listen.

XIX

GOOD LUCK

Every artist possesses, more or less, some good qualities. Good luck for an artist consists in an opportunity of appearing before the public under those favorable circumstances which bring his best qualities into strong relief, so that everyone can appreciate them.

I wish every student Good Luck, but not too easy luck lest the student lose his common sense and believe that he is a double star. *Often, sudden easy success brings bitter deception later on.* It takes a well-balanced mind to understand the causes of a sudden, lucky success—sometimes it may be the result of circumstances altogether, outside of the ability of the singer. In that case, he should take the chance of his success with appreciation and not spoil it by foolish vanity or inconsiderate actions; otherwise, the success may end in failure.

I should prefer the modest beginning, such as is made by people who have not sudden luck but who have strong will. People who improve while waiting for a better opportunity and who persevere in trying again and again—succeed. *Perseverance and improvement are two great factors*

of success—far better than good luck. Good luck may go back on one, but perseverance and improvement always bring good results. *But perseverance needs self-confidence*—an estimation of the value of your artistic talents which are some day to be recognized by the public. Self-confidence in your own talents does not mean that stupid pride of the lucky mediocrity, who comes to the front, stands for a while amongst the real artists and then disappears unnoticed, back to mediocrity where he belongs.

Very seldom do we hear of a great artist who came to the front at once. Most of them had to fight their way to success. The reason why the singer of little talent and sudden luck, does not last, is because his sudden success develops his vanity to an extent that interferes with his artistic growth. Vanity means relaxation; he sleeps happily on his easy success; he believes he has reached the top and does not realize that the real top is far, far away from him.

So, should good luck come to you, keep cool; put your vanity in an ice chest. Do not let it boil; for it is very dangerous. It makes bad microbes instead of killing them.

XX

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PUPIL

Engaged—at last! The student is as happy as a bird. He feels like the sailor who has come safely through a heavy storm. He forgets all the trouble he has had, all the anxiety, the lessons, the school and the teacher. Of course, the teacher first of all, because he is merely a guide who takes people over treacherous chasms. Once they have reached the other side safely, they bid their guide a cheerful good-bye. If a teacher could have, in reality, all that the pupil gives him in promises during the period of study, that teacher would be a millionaire. He would have palaces, quantities of precious gifts in diamonds, rubies and pearls. Poor Tiffany would be ashamed of his display.

During the years of study the pupil is puzzled as to what he shall be. He does not see his way clear; one day he is hopeful, another day the voice is bad and everything looks black. He is afraid; he thinks he will never succeed. He becomes a coward; he cannot see clearly; he trembles for the outcome. The teacher is his only salvation, his only god, the god who must make him an artist, bring him out, make him a success. In

such a state of mind, one can easily imagine the kind of vows, promises, and so on, which the pupil makes his teacher. I believe, too, that he is in good faith at that very minute, when he says "Professor, if ever I succeed, you shall not worry about teaching any more. You shall be rich; you deserve it. You have made me an artist. You made it possible for me to succeed." Even the family of the pupil joins in the chorus of presents to come. It is truly a shower, a cyclone of rich gifts that floods the home of the teacher—the lucky dog.

When the pupil puts his foot on the first step of the ladder and he is quite a success, all the presents of palaces, automobiles, and so on, are greatly reduced, sometimes even to a little post card on Christmas Day and that only if the pupil is not too busy, with his new friends and admirers, to remember the teacher.

The vocal teacher may call himself lucky if he is remembered by his pupil and if the pupil will admit that he has studied with him and does not give the credit, as very often happens, of all his success to some other teacher with whom he may brush up some songs.

But the evolution is natural. The pupil, who considered himself so little before, discovers upon his first step on the stage that everyone finds him splendid. "What a beautiful voice! What a lucky teacher to have had the opportunity of

teaching you!" So the pupil wakes up. He begins to think, "It is *I* who have the talent"—*I* (already he thinks with the traditional, artistic *I*). Then not only is the pupil glad to have made no foolish agreement during the stormy days of despair, but he also even feels somewhat ashamed to confess that a little, of course a very little, part of his success is due to someone other than this wonderful "*I*." As I have said, all this is only human, a most natural evolution—the evolution of the little chick that came out of the shell and became a rooster. There are some good-hearted pupils who like their teachers even after becoming successful; but I must truly say that they are the exceptions.

The evolution is too big a one; and sometimes the mind of Mr. *I* is so small that it can hardly contain his vanity; hence there is little room for fair thoughts.

XXI

STAGE LIFE

Operatic students, after having accomplished their artistic studies, have to go through the experimental study of artistic diplomacy in stage life. To navigate the stage channel without running against rocks of jealousy, the shallow waters of false friendship, undercurrents of gossip, to be so careful as not to be rammed by some other ship in the way, or sunk by the captain (manager), one must be a very fine pilot indeed and must be careful to keep a constant eye on the rudder.

First of all, the beginner has to make himself very small in order to go through some of the more dangerous places. He must be prepared against all the winds of gossip—which are the worst of all winds, and he must try not to be taken by surprise. One must not lose his balance in the sea of honeyed words, congratulations, offerings of protection, friendly advices, and so on.

The debutante must have a very happy disposition, to be able to please everyone on the stage, great and small. The best way to success is to have a permanent, beautiful smile on one's face. If someone says something not very kind about

another artist, or something too kind about himself, smile. If they say you are doing well, smile. If they say you are doing badly, smile. If you are a soprano and another soprano tells you how glad she is of your success, smile, never mind, smile and smile again. Listen but never talk. Greet everyone cheerfully who looks happy. Avoid them when they are in bad humor.

At the beginning, never talk about yourself. You will have plenty of time to do so—like your companions—when you are a success. Try to advance without making yourself too conspicuous. Somebody might not like it. Try, if possible, to be friendly with everyone, it is not so very hard. Tell everyone that he is great; and, confidentially, say that he is the greatest of all. The vanity in an artist is not a sin. It is a sentiment, his second life, a necessity. When an artist says that he hates to be praised, that he dislikes adulation, do not believe it. He is either posing or fishing.

But after all, what is success, if not the adulation of the whole public?

Apart from that unavoidable necessity of vanity, artists are the best people on earth, simple and good-hearted and impulsive, according to their very changeable moods. If they were calm and systematic, like normal people, they would not be artists. Artists have an overflowing quantity of sentiment and enthusiasm—so that they have

to communicate it—to expand, to get it out of their systems. And beside all this, think how they are spoiled by the public which adores them! They are like spoiled children—everybody spoils them, the public, friends, editors. They have everybody at their feet. I think that they must be a pretty well-balanced lot to be no more conceited than they are.

Think of the exciting life that is theirs daily! Their responsibilities before the public, the care of their health, the straining for a success, the drain put upon them from the outside people wanting to meet them, asking favors, pictures, autographs, students seeking advice, newspaper men demanding interviews. Then come invitations to parties, dinners, which cannot be refused, rehearsals of new operas, plans with managers for concert tours, the making of records, moving pictures, dressmakers, servants, nurses, husbands, chauffeurs and cooks. Well, I should call that “something to do.”

Every day brings its little troubles and its little joys. It is the continual excitement of the emotions, the constant ups and downs, which, naturally enough, affect their nervous systems. Then, as to their variable moods, they may like, dislike, hate, despise, find good and like again, all in a single day. Sometimes it depends on a very little thing; a trifle makes them feel happy or miserable. No wonder, then, that the stage life

has not the peaceful serenity of a convent nor the still softness of a beautiful summer's day.

The stage life, however, has an irresistible attraction, not only for the artists but for everyone. The public likes it without even knowing what it really is. The curiosity of the public is aroused by the many strange stories which people tell about happenings on the stage. Love affairs, quarrels, funny people, odd habits of artists, good times. All these things excite the imagination of the public. Much must be discredited, however, before we get to the facts of these stories.

Indeed, outside of the strange but picturesque confusion of the stage during a performance, there is nothing that makes it different from any other place where everyone attends to his own business. All the artists are in their dressing rooms, waiting for the time to go out on the stage. One hears from time to time some scale, arpeggio, falsetto, some roaring basso tones, and that's all. The chorus, the ballet, are upstairs in their dressing rooms; all the assisting masters are at their places, supervising the performance. One sees the stage managers, the directors, giving orders to the electricians. During the *entr'act* no one is on the stage, except the stage hands setting up and arranging the scenery. One may readily see that there is not much going on in the nature of "strange happenings," outside of that which goes on in any other place of business. But it is the

atmosphere, the ensemble of stage life that makes people think it so different from all other businesses; and then they call it a dangerous place, from a moral standpoint.

As for the atmosphere, it is in fact quite different from other places of business or ordinary life. As for morality, however, life on the stage is just as bad or good as it is in society, in public or in private life, in stores, in business offices, at the seashore, on board a steamer, in the country, in all the sporting parties, parks, streets, in metropolis, town and village. In all other places, things often happen which very seldom occur on the stage. Morality is not in atmosphere but in people. One can be moral anywhere, provided one is so at heart, and wishes to be. If there is an attraction in stage life, it is the uncertainty of its ups and downs which is so exciting. Except for this and the interesting personalities of the artists, stage life is a regular one, sometimes even very monotonous. For example, toward the end of a long season, when there are no more excitements and when everything is going quietly, the artists grow tired and look forward to the end of the season.

The student who has been engaged and is conscious of his artistic value must not be afraid of entering the stage life, provided he can perform his artistic duties satisfactorily. Those who get lost are those who find themselves engaged, but

not artistically prepared. They need too many helpers, too many friends, in order to get along and to make up for lack of ability. If they think they can advance by other means than artistic merit, they are sadly mistaken, because helpers do not last forever. That is where they lose their way, coming out finally to find themselves in the gloom of the "background," compelled to live eternally in the trenches with the chorus.

To repeat then, to succeed on the stage, the debutante must be rich in diplomacy, and richer yet in artistic ability. Then stage life will be heaven to her—even though some days will not seem so at the time.

XXII

GOING ABROAD

American vocal students say they go abroad in order to accomplish their studies, make a debut and secure a reputation. All this sounds reasonable enough; but how practicable an idea has it proved itself to be? Why is it that ninety per cent, if not more, of those students who go abroad in order to accomplish these things, come back with no better artistic equipment than they could have obtained in their own country and also without any practical results regarding their introduction into the musical world.

The differences in training, vocal teaching, agents, and opportunity, are not considerable. Nowadays, all these things are almost the same abroad as they are in America. There are good and bad teachers, honest and dishonest agents.

Only opportunities for a debut are more numerous in Europe, especially in the operatic field; but everything depends on the way in which one sets out to reach them. What then, you may well ask, causes such a large percentage of failures?

There are several reasons: First, is the absolute miscalculation of time, money and means necessary in order to succeed in a foreign country.

Second, is the total lack of any practical plan for the selection of teachers, for coming into contact with the right people, for securing help and information as to how and where to live and study. This is often altogether overlooked in the excitement of going away. Third, is the false hope of accomplishing better results under different entourage, with different people. And last but not least, is the predisposal of the student mind to thoughts other than that of serious hard work; the mirage fascinates them, the mirage of the good time they will have in Europe.

These preoccupations of the mind, coupled with ignorance of how things are managed in Europe, prevent the calm making of sensible plans and account for the failure of many students who go abroad.

Everybody, or at least the great majority of people who send students abroad, believes that in Europe everything goes easily. They think that it is much easier to study and acquire in that artistic atmosphere than it is in America. They feel sure that the teachers must be very clever, that the lessons must be very inexpensive. Engagements can surely be secured without any trouble.

These are all miscalculations, false surmises, only too common. Unfortunately, thus it is that families of limited means send their boys, but more frequently their girls, to Europe thinking

that in a few months they will return to them accomplished artists, ready to go on with their careers in America. They supply the student with money enough to tide her over a five or six months' stay in Europe and believe that by that time everything ought to go as smoothly as a summer's breeze. But it so happens that people who go abroad never can tell how much they will need, especially in the case of launching—setting out on a career. Nor can they tell how long it will take to get a good opportunity. The student can wait calmly when he lives at home with his family; but abroad it is entirely different.

Americans who have not traveled in Europe labor under the impression that living is very cheap, but they are mistaken; and besides, the student who has to work hard must live in a very comfortable way, to have the necessary physical force and spirit in order to do it. Poor living gives poor results in practicing and so much more when one is in a foreign country.

Then comes the handicap of going abroad alone, without any knowledge of the country and without a real good friend. Especially is this so with the case of the young girl student. She finds herself in a strange town, lost amidst the babel of strange tongues, very often with no one who has the authority or the opportunity to start her in a good way or who knows how things are managed in that country. So she has to depend upon

strangers whom she may meet accidentally in some boarding house, or elsewhere. They may tell her all kinds of things about teachers, or the theatrical business. She cannot tell whether they are honest or only fakes.

Meanwhile, time flies; at the end of the few months, she knows that she has to go back home.

The usual results of the short visit in Europe is that the would-be-singer comes home very happy but without any engagements. She tells her folks that Professor X said that she needed six months more of study; also the agent would have been able to find some opportunity for her if only she could have stayed a little longer in Europe. Some relatives are satisfied with such results. Sometimes they get together some more money and send the daughter once more to Europe. Sometimes they do that for several seasons. More often, however, the family and relatives realize that the student has gotten nowhere and, in order to fix the blame somewhere, decry the whole European regime of teaching, engaging, and so on.

But the ones who are really the culpables are those who undertake to send the student to Europe in this way. Even where there is good voice and musical talent, it is a mistake almost sure to end in failure.

Then, on the other hand, there are students whose families are people of means. Those stu-

dents, as a rule, do not make any miscalculation—they make no calculation at all. They like to go to Europe and they go; that is about all they do. Of course they want to study; but they seem to think that such things will develop of themselves, in the “bye and bye,” while in the meantime they peruse a rather intermittent course of study, between studio-going, resting, and having a good time.

Ah! that good time! It outshines all artistic and financial considerations in the mind of too many young students.

The ocean trip marks the beginning of the artistic career to be pursued abroad. How easily one recognizes those young students on board ship. They have so many books; they write so much! By the way, it is really strange, this writing mania that takes hold of all these Americans as soon as they are aboard a steamer. It looks as though they were going to write the history of the world! All this writing, however, stops as if by magic as soon as those busy writing ladies get acquainted. They commit their garrulousness no longer to paper but divert the stream into the ear of some willing-to-listen young man. They close their books and there is no more correspondence until the next trip.

The young student writes, too, but not so assiduously as she is too busy doing everything at one time. If there is a piano she is at it most of

the time. She talks music with no matter whom—an old lady, the chief steward. If there is the least opportunity, she sings. Vocal students talk very loudly about artists, operas, teachers, and careers to be.

The future prima donna (who goes to Europe for the debut) maintains a better, more artistic poise. She rests quietly in her chair, saving her physical and vocal energies. She speaks only to some professor or to some distinguished personage who may happen to be on board.

The beginner has the ambition of looking somewhat Bohemian—some queer little bonnet, a dress of peculiar hue, and bizarre jewelry.

Once in Europe, however, things take their course. The student who planned to stay for one year, is still there after three years, awaiting some good engagement. She writes home about her wonderful progress, her coming debut at the principal theatre, her good fortune in meeting some great artist who is immensely interested in American students.

So it is that the students, happy abroad, make their families happy at home through their letters. They are not in a great hurry to come back. They pass their time changing teachers (they do that in Europe, too). They meet people, learn languages—or at least some special charming verbs of the language—and some pretty little words of dialect. They sing some duos with other students or

friends, buy some nice things and then write home for more money. If they are in Paris—well, then the letters home are more frequent.

This is the class of people with some money, some talent, but without any definite aim or idea. The saying is that they go abroad in a box and come back in a trunk.

The only way therefore, to send a student to Europe, is to have a very clear definite plan of study, experience and time. Send him with somebody or with letters, to an honest, recommended person who can help the student over there, to someone who will introduce him to really good people, who know and will thus save him from falling into the net of fake teachers and dishonest agents. Find these things out in advance, else he will grope blindly, like a man in a forest at night, and lose his way.

If the family is making sacrifices to send the daughters to Europe, one of the very important things to find out is whether she has the sincere ambition to become an artist, a real passion for study and a strong determination to succeed. Only too often the student merely imagines that she wants to do these things. She mistakes the poignant stirrings of her fine adolescence for the call to a life of art. She longs to feel the potency of her newly discovered self. She longs for worlds to conquer, to know the tang of adventure; and, because she is young, she does not know and

calls this something she wants Music—Music! Music it undoubtedly is, but of an altogether different sort. It is mostly a desire for excitement, fun, a little something to do and the *good time*.

In the first case, it would be right to let the girl go to Europe—under proper conditions. In the second case, it would be far better to have her try her study in America and let her have the good time at home. The ocean always has a tempting siren at the bottom.

XXIII

THE AMATEUR MUSIC LOVER

It is difficult to understand why some people believe it unnecessary for an amateur to have a good regular vocal foundation. Why should an amateur sing badly? He has so many advantages over the professional in studying. He is in no special hurry to make his debut. He can sing the music he likes. Whenever he pleases he can sing music that suits his voice. He has the time and means to perfect his voice and musical knowledge with an artistic training. He can hear the good artists more frequently at concerts and the opera. Often amateurs sing better than some professionals. The amateur should insist upon his teacher giving him a true foundation, instead of being happy to avoid it.

The teacher is often afraid of not pleasing the pupil, or else has not the authoritative forcefulness to make the amateur study seriously. This lack in the teacher, combined with the unwillingness of the pupil, makes the average of the amateurs one meets sing without any trace of vocal training, without style, and with poor diction. Such people should be called "Music Haters" instead of "Music Lovers."

XXIV

THE ACCOMPANIST FOR STUDENTS

A really good accompanist for students is as rare as a white fly. Having developed into a good one, he goes after more remunerative work than accompanying students. He tries to get concert work, gives vocal lessons and coaches.

Many times the accompanist interferes with the work of the teacher by suggesting to the student songs that he happens to know better, or songs in which he can display his pianistic ability. The majority of students are more pleased with their accompanist than with their teacher. Of course, with the accompanist, they have a very enjoyable time going through dozens of songs, from the latest cabaret hits to the songs of the most advanced French, Russian and German schools. Between songs, they have nice little chats about teachers, friends and current frivolities; while the lesson goes on beautifully with no remarks and no discussions. The only rub is the song that the teacher insists on giving until it reaches at least some degree of perfection.

It is a mistake to think that anyone who plays the piano can be a good accompanist, even if he does play Schumann or Chopin. The accompanist

requires many other artistic qualities besides the ability to read music and play the piano. He requires an intuitional understanding of the singer, to follow, to support, to be effective without being conspicuous, to play according to the style of the artist he is accompanying, a sympathetic sense of rhythm and dynamics, to name a few of the more important qualifications.

It is not very encouraging to try to become a good accompanist for students only, because of the small remuneration one receives for the work. It is so little, sometimes, that it would be out of place to expect anything really good. So the accompanist who works for students at so much per hour does not try for perfection in skill. He takes his work as a daily job and he is not to be blamed either; for to go over songs or exercises with some people is really a very hard job.

XXV

ARTISTIC BUSINESS

Yes, there is an artistic business. The talent is the Capital. The study represents the investment. The money you make is the income of your study and talent. They say that every American has a good business mind. It seems as though that were true about almost everything. Not altogether so, however, in some of the most important points in vocal study.

It would be considered very bad business to open a restaurant to the public without the dining-room and cook. Well, it is a very badly calculated business not to give the student a thoroughly complete course of study, to let him go out when not absolutely ready, or at least with a sixty per cent chance of a good success.

It is bad business to save money by giving him cheap instruction. It is bad business to let him start with a false step. It is bad business to interfere with his career or to stop him when he is making good progress. Business in art is a very important point to be considered. One must not get a false impression or let his head be turned by a huge success at home. It is one thing to sing for friends gratuitously and another thing

to have the same people at your concert paying for their tickets.

To sing for a manager is not an artistic entertainment but purely a business matter; for the manager is first of all a business man. He considers how much he can get for your ability. If you have no ability, you are of no use to him. He cannot consider you in any other way. The more your artistic value, the higher your salary and chances. With this business proposition so clear, one cannot understand why people take the study of a professional student so carelessly and superficially. It is purely very bad business.

XXVI

ABOUT TELLING THE TRUTH TO STUDENTS

It seems strange that many teachers, friends, even managers and artists, are afraid to tell the truth to people who sing for them. A teacher should tell the truth to a pupil. Any other course means trouble for the pupil and himself in the present and future.

If a mezzo who wishes to be a soprano, or a concert singer who wishes to be an opera singer, were told by the teacher that it is impossible, they would not study with him. But nevertheless the teacher should tell the truth and let his less conscientious colleague have the trouble of making the poor mezzo yell at the top of her voice at every lesson and of having to keep on promising that the upper tones will come. Let other teachers have the trouble of coaching for grand opera a pupil who is fitted only to be a concert singer. In the end, the pupil himself will be disgusted with the results. He will leave the teacher and send his friend to study with the one who told him the truth in the first place. In such cases one can readily see that truth is a good business, also that it saves much precious energy which is

wasted in trying to make people believe things that are not possible or true. Truthfulness makes teaching so much easier. There are some truths, however, which seem to dismay.

When a teacher tells a beginner that he must study three or four years before he will be ready the pupil becomes frightened or so disappointed that he runs away from that teacher as quickly as possible. Well, if one kept track of that pupil, one would see that the same pupil who was horrified at the idea of studying for three or four years, after five years of wandering from one teacher to another in order to succeed quickly, is willing to start all over again from the very beginning in order to learn how to sing. That pupil has lost four or five years of study without any result, because he could not understand a simple truth. People are not willing to listen to the truth generally—and so much the worse for them. They learn later on how foolish they have been. That later on, unfortunately, very often means “too late.”

XXVII

THE EAR DRUM OF THE SINGER

I must confess to surprise in not having, as yet, heard of an auricular vocal method. I can imagine the book written by some ear specialist, illustrated with anatomical drawings—lines picturing the sound waves which pass into the ear of a singer, their percussion on the ear drum, their traveling up to the brain, down to the larynx, up again to the mouth and out into the open air. That I have not as yet seen such a method demonstrated does not mean that it does not exist—there must be one somewhere.

But seriously speaking—it would be interesting after all, for the singer to hear his own voice. Certain it is, he does not hear it in the same way that other people do. Because of this inability to hear oneself, this acoustic defect, so to speak, the simple becomes the difficult.

Vocal art is not a positive science, so it cannot be taught scientifically, nor is it a natural phenomenon which nature herself takes care of. It is the combination of the two elements—the natural, and the acquired. The great difficulty in teaching as well as in learning, is due to the

very fact that the singer cannot hear his own voice. His judgment therefore, is not a direct one—it is the reflection of the effect of his voice on other people. On this reflection—on this vicarious experience, the singer has to depend almost entirely.

That is why a vocal student, who may be intelligent in many other ways, can be told things about his singing and the way to study to which he would not listen, were conditions normal and in his favor.

Students as well as singers, already launched in their careers, are very often advised to do things the absurdity of which any lay outsider could see. But the singer firmly believes that he has found the “open sesame” to the right conception—until all of a sudden he finds that he is altogether mistaken, changes his mind entirely and takes up with fresh enthusiasm the new idea—which this time is sure to be the genuine one—until the next change of mind.

If a singer could hear himself as others hear him, conditions in vocal art would undergo a considerable change. The positive proof that the singer does not hear himself is given by the phonograph. When the singer hears his voice reproduced for the first time, he finds qualities and defects which he never knew he possessed. A witty pessimist used to say that it is often a

blessing that the singer cannot hear himself. This could be applied to certain celebrities who think that the only reason of other people's existence is to listen to them sing and to worship at their shrines.

XXVIII

STARS

Stars are very far away in the sky—one cannot reach them—so are the stars on the stage. These stage stars are lifted to their lofty elevation by the public. When a singer is once pronounced a star by the public, he can do any sort of thing he pleases, in singing, acting or any caprice. The star stands above the critic, just as a deputy elected by the people, stands above the law. This deputy could not be arrested even if he were a thief, so unquestionable is his position. Therefore, with the stars as powerful as deputies, that is to say “all powerful,” it is almost useless to try to make people realize that the stars are the cause of many of the shortcomings of the modern theatre.

First of all—the star system retards the development of the musical mentality of the public. As long as the public will go to an operatic performance merely to hear a singer—there can be no intellectual appreciation and enjoyment of music—I mean, the true enjoyment of the operatic work. This system also limits the enterprise of operatic managements by the demands for salaries, altogether out of proportion to merit—by

the cornering of exclusive rights to sing certain operas and other fantastic pretensions.

The partiality of the public in overlooking all the faults of their stars, while being hyper-critically severe with other artists, is to be deplored.

It is anything but constructive; and the public, by so doing, consciously or unconsciously puts the other singers on such a low level that the result is that a performance without a star is considered altogether unimportant—practically worthless.

People who go to symphonic concerts really go to listen to music. The more significant the music, the more vital the interest. These same people act quite differently, however, at the opera. They do not go to listen to the music—they go to hear a star, to applaud a personality. In fact, of all the popular operas, those arias stand out, which have the virtue of being sung by the star.

The proof that the public does not consider the beauty of the music for the music itself, but only the pleasure given by the singer, is demonstrated by the fact that during any orchestral intermezzo or symphony (unless it be the fashion to remain silent) everyone in the audience discusses his affairs and only desists when the curtain is raised.

Opera should be listened to for its own sake. The artists must bring out the full beauty and meaning in order that the opera may be properly rendered. In other words, at the opera one should exercise one's faculties as fully as at a concert.

One should not hear it acoustically only, but listen intellectually and acoustically at the same time.

These facts not only make it difficult for the management to arrange good performances during the season without stars but also take away the chances of the other good singers. They are forever kept at understudying the rôles of the stars, with a disheartening certitude that they will never be permitted to sing them. In this way the developing of new talent is checked. This strikes at the very root of art and stunts its growth.

A great Italian, who has a real love for musical art and who blames what he calls "The damnable system of stars" for narrowing the operatic musical art to the hearing of a handful of fortunate singers, came to America with the intention of putting an end to this state of things. He tried to interest the public in artistic performances of musical works. He was very glad whenever he could obtain a success independent of stars. But finally he went away discouraged, saying "The public is too spoiled with the star system to want anything different. They need them. The artistic merits and beauties of an operatic work as a whole do not appeal to them as a song does or as a coloratura aria sung by a star. They cannot do without him or her, as the case may be. They have to hear him year in and year out. No matter if he has no voice left or does not sing any

longer with the same charm or artistic spirit, the public elects the star to sing for three generations at least, unless something happens to prevent it—war, epidemic, revolution or death.”

The United States can discharge Presidents and Senators but cannot dismiss operatic stars. They are not considered as singers; they do not need to be; they are a national institution. So the best thing to do is to give three cheers for the *Star-Spangled Banner*, in which, I am sure, all the constellations of the operatic and concert sky will join with artistic feeling and financial enthusiasm.

XXIX

THE PUBLIC THEATRE GOERS

Foreigners always admire the Olympian serenity of the American theatre-going public. They sit through a performance smiling, patient—no matter how good or bad the play or the artists may be—no matter how many the prearranged encores may be. The public never protests nor does it show its disappointment. In fact one sees that at all performances ten or fifteen good friends of an artist, or some people who are given the job of furnishing applause, can make the performance a success. They can demand as many curtain calls and encores as they like, against six hundred and sometimes, a thousand people who keep silent but who are anything but pleased with the performance. Fifteen people imposing themselves upon a thousand who cannot show their disapproval, for fear of being prosecuted for disorderly conduct, is indeed a strange phenomenon of the United States. If the public would only keep silent and let the fifteen or so applauders go ahead and make the noise alone, this in itself would show the public's dissatisfaction and serve as a judgment. But the American public is good hearted and when the artist comes out, it joins the

fifteen or so friends in their applause. Thus the success is actually confirmed by the people who do not like the performance or the artist at all.

You may say, "What is the use of worrying when a singer is off pitch or sings badly? What is the use to lose one's temper over a silly play which has been advertised as the greatest success of the season? Let the singer have as many encores as he pleases, let his friends enjoy calling him out. If we do not like it, we will not come again. We go to the theatre to pass the evening pleasantly—we do not wish to be bothered with judging."

That is all very well, but that indifference of the public does not benefit Art in the United States. It does not spur the artist to better things, nor the manager to better work. It does not save the public from being constantly duped and deceived. *In spite of apparent indifference, the public feels very much disappointed when the evening has been wasted at a bad performance. Why then do they not show their dissatisfaction in some polite but clear manner, to the artist or manager?* It would be a good lesson for the bad and a glorious reward for the good; and there would be much better material on the artistic market. The public continues to talk a great deal about American art and its progress; but in truth it is not very much interested in it, especially in

musical performances and in its native artists or productions.

There are people and committees who try to promote, advance and improve American art by lectures, meetings, prizes, and so on; *but the musical art of a country cannot be made by committees or lectures. It is made by the people of the country*—the people who want it, who need it, who ask for it. In Europe every little town has an opera house. Everyone is interested in it. The openings are events like the opening of the Metropolitan in New York; and more so, because they are not events of fashion but of art. People are interested in the new singers. They like to judge them and to make them. They enjoy seeing young talent come to the front. They enjoy the great stars but they do not go to hear them perennially as is done in America. They want new emotions, new artistic personalities. That is why they have a national opera and national singers. Why is it that this great country has but one or two opera houses in all? Why is so little opportunity given to native talent? *In every town there should be a theatre for operatic performances, in order to give the younger talent an opportunity of developing and of coming to the front.* Then it would become a national art.

One might reply that, though there are not many opera houses, there are many concert halls all over the United States. That is true, but who

sings in these halls? Always the same singers, heralded by their managers and press agent. Managers do not care for young artists or debutants. They do not want them at all. They do not consider them in any way, not because they do not like debutants who are good singers, but because they cannot find a place for them. And why? Because the American public does not want American debutants, even in a concert in a little country town.

After all the great talk as to American art, when the Metropolitan gives an opera written by an American composer, the public shows little interest, attending in small numbers, even the *premiere* performance.

In the great city of New York the chances are not any better for singers. All the theatres are overflowing with patrons every day. Even on the holy days the people rush in masses to listen to some music at the so-called Sunday concerts. A debutant may sing on Sunday, Monday or Thursday. It will not make any difference. Nobody comes to listen to him. If he has the fantastic idea of giving a concert in New York as his debut, he must get busy for a couple of months in advance and give away as many tickets as possible; he must beg friends to come to listen to him. On the day of the concert, he may call himself fortunate if he sees in the audience two or three hundred people—friends who have kindly sacri-

ficed themselves in order to make the theatre look halfway filled. When the concert is over the debutant except for some criticism which makes him unhappy, finds himself no further advanced than before. It will take years and years of perseverance to become known. Unless some unusual opportunity presents itself, he will find all doors closed to him.

And the public does not care. It does not want the trouble of creating artists or new operas. It gets them ready-made from Europe, from the Metropolitan Opera House or some other great institution. An artist who is connected in any way with a famous musical institution is accepted all over the United States without question. A first-class artist often has a great deal of trouble to find an engagement even on the vaudeville stage.

It seems that the people do not want to commit themselves. They do not want the responsibility of art, they leave that task entirely to musical editors. One must say that the musical editors in the United States are generally good, intelligent and almost always impartial. But the public reads the newspapers the day after a premiere, or the debut of a singer, merely to have an idea of what it was, that is, if it were right or wrong in its *silent* judgment.

They call that Olympian indifference, politeness. That may be so, but *it is to be hoped that*

the day will soon dawn when the American public will show the same fiery enthusiasm in artistic performances as it does in sports. At a ball game, if any play foul, the fans quickly show their disapproval. Why not then in the theatre?

XXX

THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD AND THE EGG

That so much discussed "scientific method" which, through the analyzation and description of the anatomical actions of the vocal organs, is intended to produce a scientific singer, means in reality to produce an *artificial singer*.

In the scientific method, the natural instinct comes in almost as a secondary matter—the science taking nature's place—all emotions to be performed under a scientific control.

With that scientific control as a fundamental rôle, the art of singing is reduced to a mere mechanical knowledge. Almost every day some amazing scientific discovery comes out for all the needs of the would-be singer—voices restored or developed by scientific nerve control. Some day we will certainly hear of a new method based on the control of the vocal glands.

It is a real tragedy to think of the ignorance of those poor vocal masters of the past teaching the so-called *bel canto*—producing some good singers during two or three centuries—certainly by some mistake or a strange combination, perhaps the strange combination of a normal com-

mon sense with the natural artistic intuition of the pupil. At that time it took at least five years to become a good singer; nowadays they do it in a few weeks of mental concentration.

It is true that the modern singer cannot execute scientifically the music that those old-fashioned singers did naturally with great ease.

The real trouble that exists between the two different schools lies in this fact—the old school used to rely too much on the natural aptitude and artistic talent of the pupil, and considered all anatomical and psychologic explanation a superfluous complication. The modern school instead exaggerates the ignorance of the pupil and takes very little into consideration his natural aptitude.

In many instances those scientific rules are so obscure and complicated that in order to understand them the poor pupil ought to be a throat specialist, a biologist, a phrenologist and an expert psychologist!

That poor pupil with a good musical understanding, who thought that the beautiful art of singing was quite a different thing than a concentration the action of muscles, must have suffered a great set-back to his natural enthusiasm.

Of course there are pupils who need more or less explanation than others; but here comes the care with which the master, *who must have all the scientific knowledge of vocal organs and understand the mental and psychological nature*

of the pupil, must turn this scientific and his practical experience into practical and artistic advice in correcting the pupil's faults—just as a doctor would cure his patient. What the patient needs is the result of the doctor's knowledge and not the knowledge itself.

The scientific mechanical training makes the pupil terribly conscious of all the muscular actions of the vocal and respiratory organs, and that constant technical concentration takes away from him all the freedom of mind. Sometimes a technical word may upset his mind completely; for instance, abdominal breathing is natural, not abnormal. Then when the pupil is asked to breathe diaphragmatically, he gets panicky and terribly conscious, as if it were something strange and unnatural. He tries to do it with all kinds of wrong contractions—raising the shoulders, swelling the chest, moving that poor diaphragm out and in, as if he had never taken a deep breath in all his life. The idea of taking the breath scientifically prevents him from doing it naturally.

The very same thing happens when he is told about the lowering of the tongue, relaxing the jaw, opening the mouth, according to scientific descriptions which upsets his way of thinking.

The duty of the teacher is to teach the pupil scientifically and artistically—without trying to make the pupil a doctor or a vocal machine, *nor self-conscious*.

Science has made wonderful progress and accomplished wonderful things; but there are things that science alone cannot do! We have the mechanical piano reproducing artistic playing, and the scientific phonograph.

Science can tell us exactly all the substances of which an egg is composed; but science cannot produce a humble little egg for an omelet!

Science has succeeded in having chickens hatched in an incubator. Yes—but in the incubator there must be a *real egg*. *No egg—no chicken!!!*

Of course there are good eggs and bad eggs, fish eggs, even crocodile eggs. In that case the vocal instructor must be the scientific incubator that helps them to come out—singers.

If the pupil is a musical egg, the incubator can be of great help; but if he is not, there is no scientific knowledge on earth that can make him come out and sing his kirikiky. In positive science, *science comes first*; in Art, natural talent and musical aptitude come first.

XXXI

WHAT ESTABLISHES THE REPUTATION OF A VOCAL TEACHER

The reputation of a vocal teacher is one of the most discussed, glorified and dilapidated at the same time by all kinds of people. No one would dare to discuss methods in violin, piano, or any instrument; but everyone believes himself entitled to criticise or to support the work of a vocal teacher.

Reputations are well described in a few verses of the classic Italian poet, Metastasio, when he says:

“Dell'uom la fama e simile dell'ombra ch'egli
spande—

Ora del ver piu piccola, ora del ver piu grande.”

(A man's fame is like the shadow that he projects. Sometimes smaller, and sometimes larger than his real size.)

The reputation of a vocal teacher very often makes some amazingly big jumps from one size to another, especially since the advertisements which were formerly used for merchandise or

patented medicines have become an absolute necessity for the advertising of artistic reputations. There are great and small displays of artistic reputations as there are glaring electric displays on top of the buildings of a modest little green light in a store. There are full-page or two-inch reputations, sometimes according to the artistic ability and some other times according to the ability of—the pocketbook.

If you ask, “What establishes the reputation of a vocal teacher?” the answer is, “A successful pupil.” Yes, but from a logical standpoint it should not be so; because, if *one* successful pupil can make a good reputation, *two* unsuccessful pupils ought to make a bad one. Everyone knows that the number of those who do not succeed in being acclaimed as stars is far greater than the ones who reach the goal of a world fame.

Besides, the success of a pupil too often depends on special circumstances. A very good pupil who has bad luck in finding the right opportunity may remain unknown for years; while another, probably not as good, gets all the best opportunities at the very start.

But more of it—the indorsement of a successful pupil in these days is not of much value because of its fallacy. The public knows already the old story of pupils who give and take away reputations like children do toys, transferring their great affection, gratitude, considera-

tion from one teacher to another, usually giving all the credit to the last one who arrives at the right moment to put in a frame a lovely picture made by a good artist. These indorsements are almost a humiliation for the teacher who ought to be able to stand on his own merit and not behind the indorsement of a pupil of whom he, the master, is supposed to be the judge.

There are also indorsements of great artists who, after many years of a glorious career as perfect examples of good singing, found a teacher who corrected their faults and improved their singing. This would demonstrate that their judgment in technical or artistic matters was not altogether so infallible.

Reputations are not made by statements or indorsements. The great masters whose names will go down to posterity had none of these indorsements. They had to their credit some great singers among the several hundred who studied under them. You may ask—if the indorsements of great artists, the success of a few pupils, the publicity of their activities, do not establish a real solid reputation—what does then?

It may seem a paradox, nonsense, but the ones who establish a solid reputation are the many good pupils who perhaps had not the chance to come to the front and become famous as the few who have succeeded. But it is these many hundred who made real improvements under the in-

struction of that teacher, the ones modestly successful, who are the examples, the convincing evidence of the good instruction received. They are the ones who spread the reputation of the teacher all over the country. It is just like the clientele of a good store the reputation of which is not made by the clever display made in the windows but by the good merchandise that is sold inside.

Balzac says "Beware of reputations!" which sounds like beware of pickpockets! But I think he was a little too pessimistic. Of course there are people who take advantage of their reputation. People who arrived at the top of the ladder and then allowed the reputation to take care of all their business. They are not thieves, but they do not give to the public any longer the essence of their artistic talent but merely a part of their professional routine.

But there are also artists who give with enthusiasm all their soul and talent for the benefit of the public and the sake of their art. These do not make the art merely a business matter. The reputation of a singer is made in quite a different way from that of a teacher. The singer is in direct contact with the public and his reputation can be made in one evening. A teacher has to work for years before establishing a good reputation, which can be spoiled in one evening by a poor exhibition of his teaching by one of his

pupils. This is the case when the several hundred who have made good progress hold up his reputation.

One of the strongest points which hold firmly the reputation of a teacher is his sincerity in *telling the truth* to his pupils. There are people who believe that the best way to keep pupils and make them happy is by flattering, telling of future successes, and so on; but it is a great mistake. To tell the truth, insist upon correcting faults, and to give sensible advice, may disappoint many pupils who possibly would leave the teacher in dissatisfaction. But in the long run it will prove the best artistic policy as well as the best business one.

For when all those believers in flattering mirages of future success find out that they cannot either start or keep on in the professional career on account of faults which have been neglected and of false encouragements, they go back on the charming flatterer and indorse the one who told the unpleasant but necessary truth. This is what establishes a solid reputation all over the country.

XXXII

THE SCIENTIFIC SINGING OF GREAT ARTISTS

From the very first day that I came into this beautiful world, I have lived among great artists of all nationalities. My father was one of the most prominent vocal teachers of his time, as well as a composer.

While studying composition, I was gradually initiated into the professional career of vocal teaching; first by accompanying, then coaching great artists, and finally training my own pupils. At that time it was necessary to go through such an artistic experience before being considered a vocal teacher. Nowadays, in many cases, it apparently suffices to read any one of those scientific books giving theoretical and graphic explanations of the action of the vocal organs. Thus do some tyros expect to become vocal masters overnight.

In spite of the great revelations of the laryngoscope, practically all of the vocal masters teach *according* to the *voice* and *musical* talent of the pupil, and *not according* to the *observations* with the *laryngoscope*.

Having been in contact during my career with many of the older stars and with those who have since become stars, I have had the opportunity of seeing them in all the different periods of their artistic careers. They are invariably enthusiastic students, in love with their art, devoting all their time to the study of how to beautify their voices, not *mechanically* but *artistically*. They follow the principles *based* on the *actual sound* of the *tone* and not on the theory of *thinking how the tone is* automatically made.

I have seen noted artists, too, at the highest point of their careers. I have coached them for years, but during that artistic study I never heard these artists mention great concentration of mind on the muscular action of vocal organs. When they were trying to realize some artistic effect, they went over a phrase again and again until they had found the quality of voice for the effect they had in *mind* and wanted to produce. It was an *artistic research* and all the adjustments of the vocal organs obeyed the *artistic direction* of the *master mind*—because it is not the *body* which is *musical*, but the *mind*.

The people who need anatomical or graphic examples in order to see how a tone is made or placed, cannot understand that it is the artistic conception of a tone that decides the placement of

the voice. A *badly* conceived tone can never be in the *right place* while a good one always is.

During the period of their glorious careers, great artists are always proud of that keen artistic conception of tonal beauty which guides their research in striving for artistic effects.

When the end of that glorious career approaches, when the voice gradually becomes rebellious or is fading away, some strive to keep alive their great reputation by telling the public of their vast scientific knowledge. Their minds are tormented by the idea that the public will say that they were singing *almost naturally*, that is, without any special merit aside from being born that way. With that the great singer would come down to the level of the average pupil. He disavows his natural talent, feeling that all the beautiful singing was due to *scientific concentration*.

The vanity of being a scientific singer takes the place of the preceding vanities of being a natural super-singer.

There are artists who go to another extreme by saying that they *never needed to study*, which is a vanity just as bad if not worse than the other.

But in spite of all these different assertions the real fact remains that one must have a good musical *ear*, or a musical-artistic conception of the tone; therein is the real basis of much that is passed off as science!

All the scientific explanations or graphic demonstrations of action of the vocal organs will never develop an artistic talent nor a musical ear, which after all is the "secret" and the "science" of all the *past, present and future* great singers.

XXXIII

LOVE OF ART—THE INSIDE OF AN ARTISTIC STUDY

Speaking of love of art, one notices that the majority of our great artists come from very humble positions and rise to celebrity. This is because art is all they have. They have no other pleasures, no other comforts in their life, only the art that they adore, and to which they devote constantly all their thought. In that lies the secret of their great success. If one could live with them and go through all the troubles and joys, while struggling and working, one would know the inside of a real artistic study.

But the average easy-going student believes that vocal study is merely a charming pastime. When he realizes that real study is an entirely different matter, he is very much disappointed and discouraged. And his friends and family are disappointed. They cannot understand it. Why? The pupil has a good voice—then to sing should be just a very little trouble, or no trouble at all. They wonder why he (or more often she) is not already on the stage, and so on indefinitely. All this happens because no one of these persons

knows the inside of the real process of artistic preparation for an artistic career.

If ignorance of the inside of an artistic training brings many regrettable results, not less dangerous and unconstructive is the ignorance of all the material requirements needed to succeed in an artistic career. It is that deplorable ignorance which causes so many failures among artists and especially debutantes. One would think that when a talented pupil is ready, the only thing he has to do is to get out and sing—sing for a manager and get an engagement; sing for the public and make a success; receive his reward; and then open an account at a bank. But unfortunately it is seldom so, except in the case of some lucky mortals.

The average good student has to go through many kinds of experiences in every direction—as an artist, as a social diplomat, as a business man. To succeed takes a mighty well-balanced mind, besides the artistic value. What confronts the beginner is always the inside manipulation of the career, of which the newcomer has not the least idea, for he has had the vision from the outside only. Some are quick to learn. Many musical stars become financial experts—sometimes too expert. Others are slow or too visionary, and never learn. They do not grasp the inside working of the professional machinery, and that is a great mistake—one that brings with it many others, and

the failure of the singer. All these troubles could be easily avoided if those who want to start an artistic career would take the trouble to investigate the inside and not be content to gaze only upon the outside. This precaution would save disappointments and sorrows to many.

XXXIV

SELECTING A VOICE TEACHER IN A DISTANT CITY

Persons living far from the great artistic centers often have great difficulty and embarrassment in selecting a vocal teacher in a distant city. The student or the student's parents are blessed with innumerable advisors, many of whom, although they know nothing of the subject, do not hesitate to discuss as authorities.

Let us take a typical example. The daughter is the possessor of an acceptably good voice, an encouraging musical disposition and a pleasant blonde appearance. Mother and Daddy were very much delighted when Zizi was singing "Poor Butterfly" in her own way.

One nice evening (those things usually happen after a good dinner) a friend of Mr. X said to him, "You must get a vocal teacher for Zizi."

Said Mme. X, "A very good idea. We will have a vocal teacher."

Mr. X added gaily, "Oh, that is a very easy matter!"

But that *very easy matter* became one of the most intricate of problems when Mr. and Mme. X

started to inquire about vocal teachers, to read the advertisements in the musical papers and to ask the advice of some experts in the matter.

One said, "You must have a *real vocal master*, not a fake. Don't get a singer. Singers know how to sing, but not how to teach."

Another said, "You must have a singer! He is the only one who knows everything by experience."

The chorus of advisers grew daily—no singer, no self-made teacher—they know nothing about voices and less about music.

"Don't trust advertisements," said some, "in the paper everyone is a 'wonder.' When you study with them, you find out that they are only good advertisers."

Zizi should have a musician. She has a naturally good voice; all she needs is a musician. "For God's sake, don't take a musician!" advanced others. "What they call a musician is an accompanist, who poses as a vocal master! They can't tell the difference between a drum and a soprano!"

Again, "Don't take an American," urged other friends. "They have no traditions. They are 'business teachers.'"

And from another quarter came: "Beware, do not fall into the hands of some foreign bluff! They come here with a 'fake' reputation; and sometimes

the great master is only a barber who has changed his mind during the trip across the Atlantic!"

Mr. X did not expect any such chaos of opinions, and the poor man was very much upset; for he could not succeed in understanding why, after centuries of celebrated singers of all kinds who must have studied the art of singing with someone, one should be so at sea to know who could be a vocal teacher.

Mr. X in desperation asked to have an explanation about all this chaos of opinion. He said that the study of singing looked to him as complicated as opening a Japanese box by a secret trick.

It does look, in fact, something like that, but the problem in itself is simple. It is the people who insist on trying to open the box in the wrong way that makes the simple trick a hard problem. The art of singing is not a terrible nor obscure problem. It is very simple if understood and conceived the right way. But there are people who, for some reason, principally to appeal to a certain class of students, make it a complicated matter. The different opinions are the natural consequences of the constant variable conceptions and temperamental dispositions of the four principal elements which form the complex of the lyric art—the singer, the public, the teacher and the critic.

If you resume the matter, you will see that the greatest disagreement comes just from the fourth

principal element which forms the basis of the lyric art. If they do not agree and do not have an absolute form of judgment, how can you expect a clear and established opinion?

XXXV

THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF A PUPIL

*The Beginner—The Advanced Student—
The Artist*

I believe that among the different branches of musical study, vocal teaching is the most interesting one. We have no crude mechanical instrument standing like a neutral barrier between ourselves and the pupil. We communicate directly, from the very beginning, with the soul of the pupil, his mind and his body.

We deal with a great variety of artistic personalities, not to say with an infinite variety of artistic moods which change according to the ups and downs of hope, fear or discouragement of the student. It is an interesting study in character.

I believe that a vocal teacher, besides the necessary knowledge, ought to possess an acute sense of psychological observation. The understanding of the personality of a pupil is an absolute necessity in teaching, especially for the development of the artistic personality which is a sixty per cent factor in success.

Throat specialists and anatomical pedagogues may not agree with this, but that does not make any difference, for the action of the vocal organs depends entirely upon mental conception.

One of the most interesting things in teaching is to watch the gradual evolution of the mind of the beginner to the advanced pupil. Nothing is more pleasant than to have before you a young beginner, full of ingenuity and enthusiasm, eager to learn, to understand, to grasp the idea of his teacher. It is the virgin ground wherein you plant the seed which will produce a sweet dainty flower or strong oak.

A wrong or inadequate foundation troubles the mind of the pupil, and it is very hard to remedy all those wrong conceptions after they are once settled in the mind of the student, or even a singer. It is a great mistake to believe that a really good master is not necessary for beginners. The bud so often fades and withers before ever having the chance to bloom.

The advanced pupil is not less interesting. He has reached the artistic part of his study. For the teacher the advanced pupil is a psychological case which needs constant watching. The pupil is then midway on the bridge which has to bring him to the artistic side. He feels already that restless spirit of the evolution. To keep him quiet, to prevent him from going out and taking the wrong

path is a matter of great importance for the teacher.

Already the advanced pupil sings for his friends, sometimes for a little audience. That is the time when different moods start to appear on the horizon of his study. Some friends find his singing very good, others tell him that he has many faults to overcome. His mind has lost that peaceful enthusiasm and the faith of the young beginner. In this case the task of the teacher becomes more difficult until he takes his pupil safely across the fatal bridge of sighs.

After that fatal bridge is once happily crossed, things clear up. Teacher and pupil start to work together, side by side, for the final result. They are at the door of the career and success. Hope, fear, joy and sorrow confused, come and go. Hopeful news alternates with disappointing refusals. These indeed are moments of great anxiety, but full of interest and great satisfaction when the pupil finally succeeds.

PART II

THE NATURAL LAWS OF THE MECHANISM
OF THE HUMAN VOICE

XXXVI

THE MECHANISM OF THE HUMAN VOICE

The mechanism of the human voice *as given by Nature*.

1. The *Mind conceives the tone*.
2. The *Vocal Organs adjust themselves* to perform the *tone conceived by the mind*.
3. The *Ear detects* if the *tone* emitted by the Vocal Organs corresponds to the *tone* conceived *by the mind*.

This is the *natural* process of tone production, which is the same as in speaking; with the difference that the quantity and intensity of breath, steadiness, flexibility and resistance of the vocal organs require more training and physical control. Because speaking is normal and singing is abnormal; that is, whereas a person can speak all the day long, he could not sing all day without endangering the whole vocal apparatus.

The vocal instrument, as given by nature, when combined with an artistic soul, a musical ear, a correct mental conception of quality of tune and pitch, is a most wonderful and beautiful instrument. With these in fine condition it does not

take much pains to develop perfection in singing.

There are people who try to misrepresent that beautiful work of Nature by substituting some of their own personal views regarding the way to produce the voice, instead of following the simple way indicated by Nature in all its phonetic phenomena. They try to give the impression that the voice is a mechanical instrument which may be used like any common machine.

While it is not on the anatomical conception of the action of the vocal organs that the emission of a beautiful tone depends, it is perhaps wise to give a graphic and technical demonstration of the activities of the vocal organs, for those persons who can better understand a problem by a practical vision of a graphic demonstration.

Many great doctors and eminent scientists are of the opinion that *the less* one knows about the anatomy of his body the better off one is. Very often one can get into serious trouble by a wrong judgment. The fact stands that when a *doctor* is sick he calls for another doctor to cure his malady.

This gives a very clear illustration of the difference between knowledge and the application of knowledge.

In the case of curing vocal students' faults, it is the teacher who must have the knowledge and be able to apply it for the improvement of the

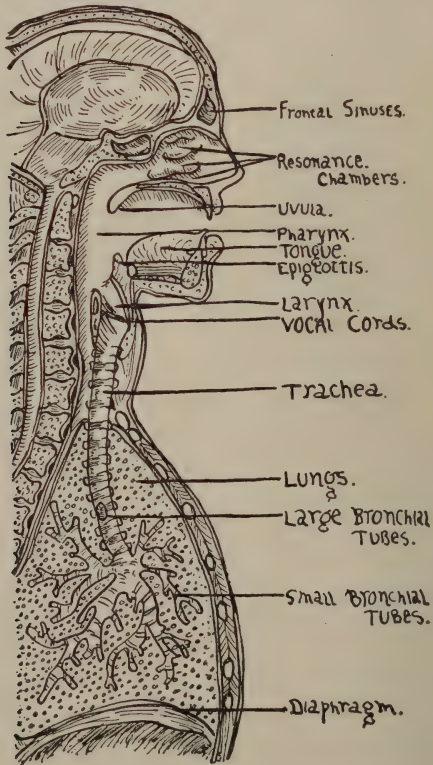
pupil. But it must be understood also that the anatomical knowledge of the teacher is not sufficient to make him a vocal instructor—because the artistic knowledge and practical experience constitutes the eighty per cent of his knowledge and ability in teaching.

The throat specialist who looks into your larynx and knows the mechanism of the vocal organs considers himself the best of the vocal masters. By the same reasoning, a piano-tuner who looks into the piano and knows all about its mechanism, ought to be considered the best of piano teachers. But there are persons who have a mechanical conception of the art of singing instead of an artistic one and need anatomical instruction.

XXXVII

VOCAL ORGANS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES

The Larynx, Pharynx, Glottis, Epiglottis, Vocal Cords, Oral Cavities, Lungs, Diaphragm, and all the abdominal, laryngeal, pharyngeal and throat, sets of muscles, are the organs of tone production.



XXXVIII

THE LARYNX

Is the box where the *sound* is formed.

In the center of the Larynx are situated the vocal cords.



A connected view of the Hyoid-Bone, Thyroid Body, Larynx, Windpipe, with its ramifications, and Lungs.

The vocal cords are firmly attached to the laryngeal wall which leaves an *interval for the*

passage of the air. That space is called the *Glottis*. Over the Glottis there is the *Epiglottis* which covers and closes the glottis when food and drink go into the stomach.

The air contained in the lungs, passing through the Larynx, creates a *sound* in the vocal cords. It is that *sound* which becomes *voice* when it reaches the resonating chambers; that is, the nasal cavities (or ducts) which are situated in the nose and consist of the channels whose openings are called nostrils. There are anterior and posterior nostrils. The posterior nostrils communicate with the *Pharynx* and other cavities situated between the bones of the head.

XXXIX

SOUND AND VOICE

The air contained in the lungs, passing through the Larynx, induces a sounding in the vocal cords, bringing the vocal cords into a vibratory and sounding motion, by coming into a partial or complete contact according to whether it is a high or low tone. That sound then becomes voice when it reaches the nasal cavities.

XL

BREATH

Breath is absolutely necessary to produce vocal sound. Nature has provided us with a voluntary and involuntary inspiration and expiration, performed by the motion of the lungs, ribs and diaphragm. In singing, the way of inhaling, holding and exhaling the breath is a matter of great importance in the emission, modulation and duration of a vocal tone.

There are three main kinds of respiratory movements:

The abdominal or diaphragmatical breathing,
Shoulder (collar-bone) breathing,
Side or rib-breathing.

The voluntary respiration is divided in three parts:

Inspiration,
Holding the breath, and
Expiration.

This threefold respiration is what one calls artistic respiration.

Shoulder breathing is found mostly in women. Men have a deeper abdominal cavity.

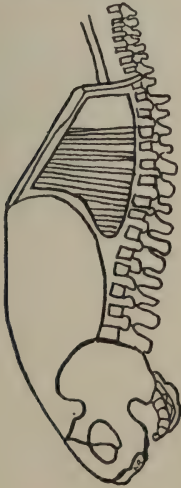
The abdominal (diaphragmatic) breathing is one recognized to be the best in singing—for several good reasons: Firstly, because one can inhale a greater quantity of breath by its expansion; secondly, it also acts as a breath reservoir, to be used at will; thirdly, by gently helping the expiration in controlling the emission of the voice, in sustained phrases, and in other peculiar situations.

Through holding the breath diaphragmatically, comes the freedom of the upper chest, neck and throat, consequently the freedom of the voice.

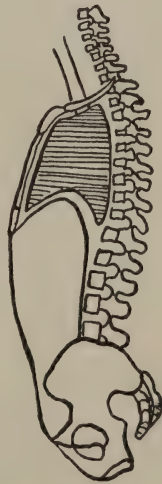
XLI

THE DIAPHRAGM

The diaphragm is a flat and sinewy muscle attached to the interior surface of the lower ribs and also to the vertebral column. It forms a wall between the thoracic and the abdominal cavity. The part of the muscle toward the chest is arched. In the act of inspiration it contracts, *flattens itself*, and by this means *increases the chest capacity*. Through relaxation, by the re-arching of the diaphragm, the lower part of the chest-cavity is made smaller and in this way the air from the lungs is expelled.



In Inspiration



In Expiration

As one can see, the action of *inhaling—holding—exhaling* is a very simple one. It should not be made a mystery or exaggerated in its execution, as many instructors do in teaching diaphragmatic breathing. Mistakes in practicing and teaching the abdominal breathing are the result.

Practicing abdominal breathing, excluding all the others (side and chest) because they are always present in taking a full breath; filling the upper chest to its capacity; insisting on breathing with the diaphragm (muscularly)—resulting in introducing the *least quantity* of air into the lungs; all these things bring a wrong conception of diaphragmatic, abdominal breathing.

One can take muscular exercises of the diaphragm separately from singing. It will increase the capacity of the lungs and improve their elasticity. The exercises should not be performed as *mere muscle movement* but *always* accompanied by *breathing*. The *mere muscular* contraction and *relaxation* of the diaphragm or other muscles is a *forced* action, which brings opposite results.

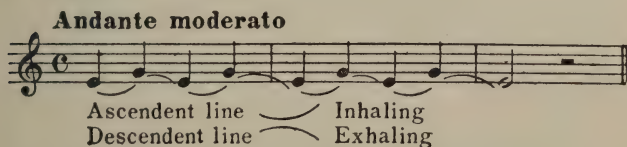
XLII

RHYTHMICAL RESPIRATORY GYM- NASTICS

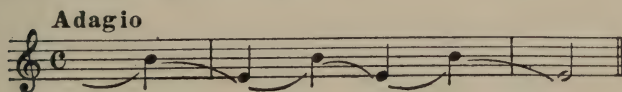
In order to obtain an even rhythmical motion of inhalation and expiration, it is necessary to give it with a musical notation. Three exercises for a gradual expansion of the diaphragm and improvement of the lung capacity follow.

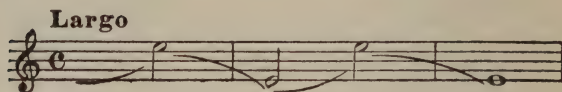
All these exercises have to be practiced with *breath only*; that is, breathing through the nose and exhaling through the lips—*semi-closed*. The notes indicate the rhythmical motion *only* and are not meant for singing:

No. 1. Breathing with a gentle motion almost as in sleep:



No. 2. With the increase in compass of the musical intervals increase the expansion of the diaphragm, and the lower ribs as indicated in these following exercises:



No. 3. *Long breath*—full expansion:

XLIII

EXERCISES FOR BREATHING AND HOLD-
ING THE BREATH

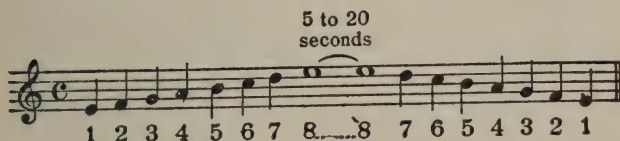
1. During the period of the eight ascending notes the breath must be inhaled rhythmically until the diaphragm is completely expanded and the lungs forced almost (not completely) to their capacity.

2. Hold the breath comfortably, without a sensation of stiffness or uneasiness, keeping the shoulders down easily, for a duration of time which can be increased gradually (in a few days) from 5 to 20 seconds—or more, if it can be done with ease.

3. Then expire *slowly*, rhythmically, with semi-closed lips—during the period of eight *descending* notes until all breath is exhaled.

XLIV

EXPANSION AND HOLDING



These exercises are arranged for the mechanical action of breathing *only*.

In singing, the breath is taken according to the different phrases, which may require slow, medium, short, or quick motions, with more or less quantity and more or less intensity.

The art of breathing comes along with the art of singing. A really good singer never makes the public aware of his breathing, or, what is worse, his need of breathing. The beautiful art of singing is not an exhibition of breath control; the less the public sees of it, the better it is. When an artist exhibits or exposes the work and effort of his technic, fifty per cent. of his artistic value is lost.

XLV

ABOUT MENTAL CONTROL OF THE VOCAL ORGANS

There is one point, a very important one, about the mental control of the vocal organs that needs an explanation. There are vocal organs which can be trained and controlled separately from the action of singing. But when the action of singing takes place it is the mental conception of the tone, in quality, range and other properties, which determines the adjustment, or control of the vocal organs. The mental conception of the action of the vocal organs, advocated by some vocal instructors, would reverse the natural law of the emission of the human voice.

In fact, what kind of a pre-adjustment of vocal organs could be obtained without the pre-conception of a tone that they have to emit?

On the mental conception of the tone depends the direction, shape, and consequently the quality of the voice. It is erroneous to blame the voice, saying, "My voice is nasal, guttural or empty"; for it is not the *voice* but the mental conception, the musical *ear*, which is wrong. When taught how to understand and to detect a nasal or gut-

tural tone, from a good one, the trained ear and mental conception will produce the right tone.

But that improvement of tone is not due to a better *conception* of the *muscular action* of the vocal organs, but to a *better conception* of the *tone itself*.

XLVI

ABOUT PASSAGES, REGISTERS

In string instruments the change depends on the size, thickness and relative vibration of the strings; in the piano the size, length and vibration of the metallic string; in the voice, by the wide or narrow coming into vibrating contact of the vocal cords which are reflecting their lower or higher tones in the different resonance chambers.

In the musical instruments the passages are: Low (basso), Medium (middle), and High (Acuto), without mentioning the point of sonority which exists also in the musical instrument, causing a change in color and quality as it does in the human instrument.

In the voice, the passages are traditionally called according to the supposed place or resonance; that is, *chest* and *head tones*. Women have

three registers; the medium is located between the chest and the head passages or register, as one prefers to call them.

Those transitory resonances exist in the human instrument by a natural law as they do in all musical instruments; they do not need to be made, placed, by any scientific method. The only thing that is needed is to *blend them* from one passage of resonance to another, avoiding a disagreeable change, or the sudden change in color as well as in size of the tone. But *blending* does not mean *making* the voice go through those passages by some muscular conception or mechanical work.

Teaching passages is very dangerous to the mental conception of the pupil; first of all because not every voice possesses the same tone, as indicated in many books. Another danger comes from the great mental trouble and pre-occupation of the pupil who tries to change his mental conception of the position, shape and focus of the voice at every change of passage from one register to another.

Imagine the mentality of a pupil going up and down a scale which includes the three registers! All that mental trouble could be very easily saved by simply training the ear to *blend the different sounds from one passage to another*—instead of giving a wrong conception of the natural law that determines the passage of the voice.

XLVII

THE ARTISTIC DICTION

During the period of florid singing, vocalization was of supreme necessity, because almost all sentiments in the lyric drama were expressed in vocalized melody. Words in both solos and ensembles were repeated *ad infinitum*. The artist took all sorts of liberties, postponing or changing words in their cadenzas whenever they did not suit their particular emission of tone. Nowadays, with the evolution of the lyric drama, the diction has become an imperative necessity, one of the indispensable equipments of a singer who wants to be ranged among the better class of artists. Singers who can only give an exhibition of a well-trained voice will not be as highly regarded as an artist with less vocal purity of tone but with an artistic diction which communicates to the audience all the emotions of an intense, impassioned interpretation and all the delicate finesse and the artistic details of a master work.

These very details are the proof of a high, artistic intelligence and training.

Technically speaking, the study of correct enunciation has a great advantage over that of tone

production. This is because the rules of good diction, articulation and enunciation are the same for everybody; while those of tone production have to be adapted to the individual and vocal capability of the pupil. The study of a correct and artistic diction is divided into three parts:

1. Placement of vowels and articulation of consonants.
2. Enunciation and connection of words.
3. Artistic diction—interpretation.

In correct diction, Voice and Diction must blend in *one* artistic whole. The free emission of the voice must never be interfered with or spoiled by the enunciation of words; and the clear enunciation of words must never be spoiled by the emission of the voice—they must blend in one *unique emission*.

The voice should never change in quality or intensity by the changing of the vowels. Passing from the lower to the upper range there is an unavoidable change in the color of the vowels and flexibility of consonants; but the ability of the singer must correct these different shadings of color in such a way as to make the changes as little noticeable as possible.

If a singer wants to find out if his diction and voice blend nicely together, he may perform the following exercise:

Vocalize a phrase—a melody—or a recitative,

with the inflection of the voice required by the phrase or song. Then repeat the same musical phrase *with words* and detect by the ear if the voice keeps the *same color* and inflection that it had in vocalizing. Then reverse the exercise, *speaking* the words first, with a *musical speaking tone*; repeat the phrase again and see if the *diction* is just as it was before.

A musical speaking tone means a speaking voice well placed *in the mask*,* having a carrying power, as when making a speech or declamatory emphasis the intensity or sweetness of which depends on the kind of musical phrase one wants to practice on. To have the voice on that musical speaking tone basis makes the singing very easy, almost like speaking itself. The voice thereby retains all its quality and expression. It is really surprising to hear how few people can speak correctly and with a clear voice. Nasal, guttural tones are very frequent, and flat enunciation of words, wrong or weak motions of lips and tongue, exaggerated motion of the jaw moving up and down on the articulation of every syllable, which is one of the worst faults in speaking, and still worse in singing. When people try to sing with such enunciation all kinds of vocal troubles commence.

*"In the mask" is a vocal term derived from the French "*dans le masque*" meaning the placing of the sound so that it seems to be located immediately behind the mask of the face.

The voice which was produced with satisfactory correctness and a good quality, changes color at every change of vowels, becoming nasal, guttural, foggy, especially on the vowels *e* and *i* (ay, ee). Among the ills, the tongue gets twisted, tight; the throat gets dry; the neck becomes stiff; the soft palate choked; the tongue rises, interfering with the free emission of the voice. Many other troubles could be added to those already mentioned, phlegm and irritation of the larynx and tonsils.

In my book, *The Italian Diction*, are many exercises for the enunciation of vowels and consonants. Here are given only a few exercises for that purpose just to furnish an idea which may help in improving the enunciation of vowels and consonants.

First of all, one should know where the vowels should be located. In giving the example, the *Italian vowels* which are very *distinct* and *pure* are used.

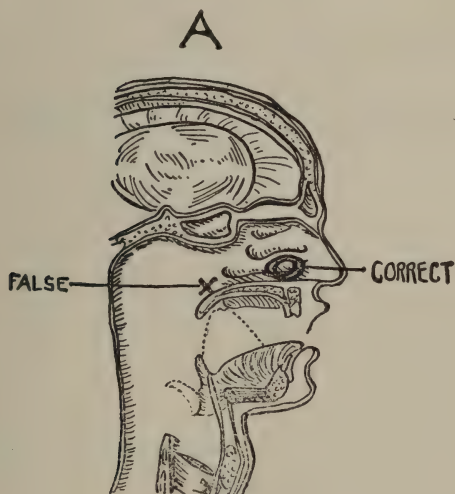
The Italian vowels are five:

- i. e.*—A—Like a in Fa-ther)
- E—(Like ai—in pain)
- I—(Like i—in machine)
- O—(Like o—in old)
- U—(Like oo—in tool)

Short U—(Like u in full)

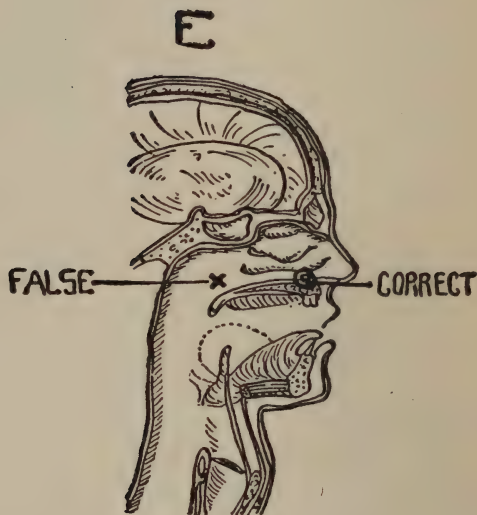
XLVIII

CORRECT AND INCORRECT PLACEMENT OF VOWELS

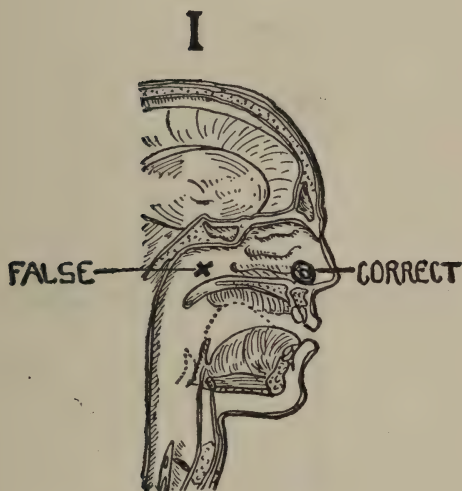


Mouth and oral passages opened, (not too widely) tongue flat at the bottom of the oral cavity. Avoid making the cavity *too open* or drawing the tongue *too far back*. Avoid stiffness in the tongue.

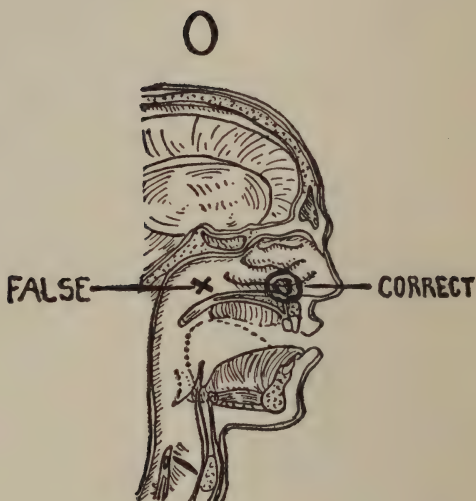
NOTE.—Dotted line in illustration—incorrect position of tongue and epiglottis in false production of the vowels.



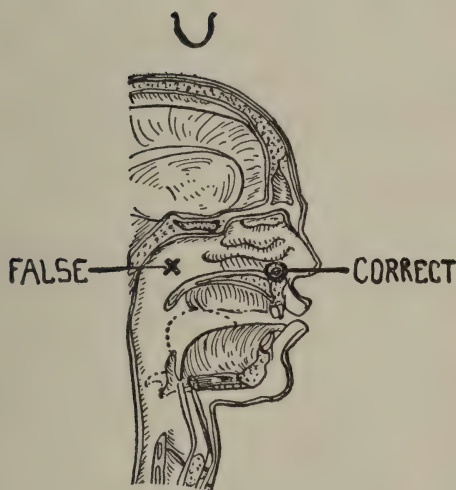
Mouth open as when smiling naturally; *tongue arched*. There are two sounds of E—*closed* and *open*. Try not to keep it too tight “in the mask.” Avoid muscle tightness.



Mouth a little more closed than in No. 5, by raising the chin; tongue more arched than in E, avoid making it *too close*, *too tight*, too much on the teeth, or too far back on the palate. In the lower tone, lips a little pushed out.



One can form a broad *O* on the *mask* (nasal cavity) without the coöperation of the lips, the lips forming nearly a circular opening. There are two sounds of *O*—close and open: Roman (close), Donna (open).



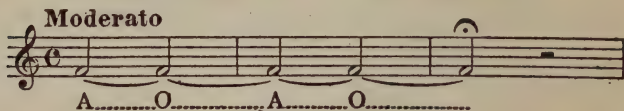
Lips closer than in *O* but not too close, not too dark (except in the French *u*) avoid giving a *falsetto* resonance.

XLIX

EXERCISES ON VOWELS

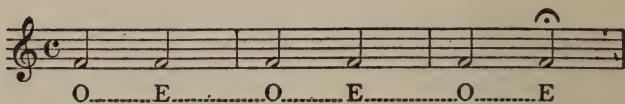
Connect the vowels a-o-e, which are the fundamental sounds on which the *system* of vowels rests. Practice accordingly the given shape.

Slowly and evenly without a change in the quality or force, passing from *A* to *O*. Gradual and even motion of the lips and mouth.



The exercise can be reversed, passing from *O* to *A*.

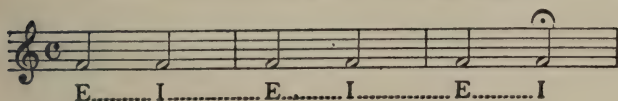
From *O* to *E* and reversed:



Even motion of lips passing from the oval shape to the motion of drawing back the corners of the mouth.

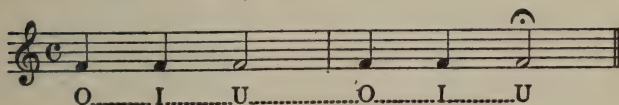
Passing from *E* to *I*:

Gentle raising of the *jaw* on *I* and even lowering of the jaw and the arch of the tongue going back to *E*.

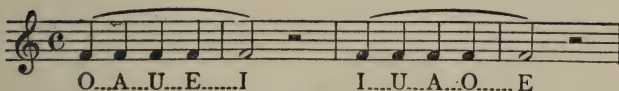
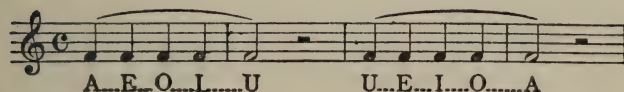


From *O* to *I—U*

Gently closing lips on *U*:

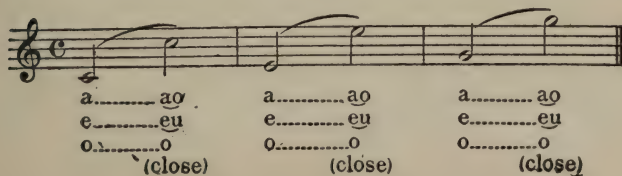


Connecting the 5 vowels:



Exercise for *blending* the *color* of *vowels*, passing from the *lower* to the *higher* register. Passing to the higher register, vowels always get darker or lighter.

The ability remains in blending the quality by adjusting the *shape* of the palate *going up*, and the *slightly shaping forward* of the lips coming down, which motion will “balance” the two colors.



L

ARTICULATION OF CONSONANTS

The articulation of consonants in Italian is very distinct and brings the voice in front, owing to the fact that the action of tongue and lips is not disturbed by any unnecessary work of the jaw. This is because in the Italian language the vowels are naturally placed "in the mask." That is one of the reasons that the Italian is a more simple language and its employment in studying singing preferred.

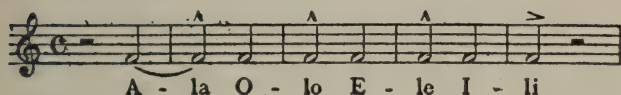
LI

EXERCISES FOR THE INDEPENDENT ARTICULATION OF LIPS AND TONGUE

First enunciate the vowel correctly, then articulate the consonant, keeping the jaw still and the shape of the vowel in the Lingual Palate—L. R.—and the Lingual Dental—N. D. S.

The following exercise has to be practiced, *first*

with speaking musical tone, *then* with *voice*, from *F* to *C* gradually:



A-la, O-la,—tip of the tongue touching the hard palate.

E-le,—tip of the tongue touching the gum of the upper teeth.

I-li,—tip of the tongue touching the upper teeth.

The same for A-na, E-ne, O-no, I-ni.

LII

EXERCISES TO FACILITATE THE ROLL- ING OF THE R

A - pra O - pro E - pre I - pri
A - gra O - gro E - gre I - gri
A - ra O - ro E - re I - ri

The order of the consonants can be changed at will, making different articulation, as—

O-lo, la ra li le-lo no-le na li, etc.

La-le-li-lo-Lo-le-li-la, etc.

LIII

THE FREE ACTION OF THE LIPS IN THE LABIAL CONSONANT M

Fix the shape of the vowel and keep the jaw as quiet as possible to prevent its unnecessary lowering.

A - ma O - mo E - me I - mi

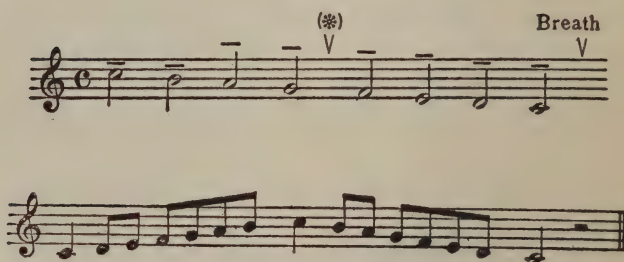
Great attention must be given to the motion of the jaw—in emitting the consonant *M*. One must make sure that the lips are not *separated* by the *lowering of the jaw*; but the jaw must have a slight motion from the articulation of the lips. This is very important, because the over-moving or wrong holding of the jaw is one thing that causes a great deal of trouble and sometimes a most serious one in diction and tone production as well.

The *jaw* is one of the most rebellious organs to subdue in its action and to bring to a natural relaxation while singing. A stiff jaw causes all sorts of trouble. Incorrect use of the lower jaw is the consequence of the habit of setting other unnecessary muscles into action in the use of the larynx and tongue, interfering with the freedom of the neck and shoulders. If pulled down too much it brings the voice down in the lower part of the jaw, causing the breath to escape and making the voice veiled and empty, out of shape and focus. Those enumerated are only a few of the many troubles derived from a rebellious, stiff jaw or a jaw in continuous uncontrolled motion up and down, as if one were eating or chewing gum, instead of singing.

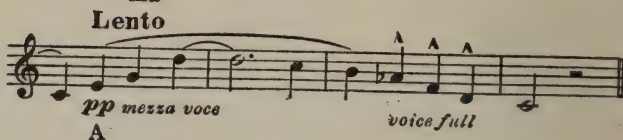
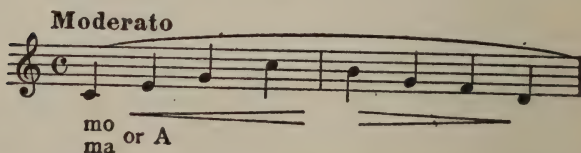
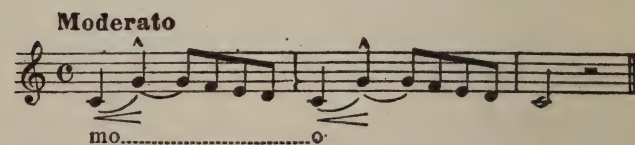
Three vocal exercises, used by the old masters, to help singers, who have had difficulty in holding the placement of the voice, in the breath

154 HOW TO SUCCEED IN SINGING

passing from one register to another, in expanding the voice on the palate, in producing the *mezzo-voce* in the place of the full tone, as if they were singing on the surface of the breath:



(⌘) The breath after G is optional,



LIV

EXPLANATION OF THE THREE EXERCISES

Take a good breath, not too much, without filling all the upper chest.

Open the mouth as for the enunciation of the vowel *A* (not too open). Raise palate well without artificial strain; and start to emit the tone without stiffness; then attack the tone directly on the mask.

Come down slowly, keeping the same position of the mouth, having the impression of holding the tone in the same place, take a breath after the fourth tone, then come down to the end. Then sing the scale up and down, blending the passages without changing the position of the mouth. Coming down from a high tone, sometimes a slight change in the shape of the lips is necessary to blend the quality.

This exercise is especially good for developing, placing, and attack of the higher tones for sopranos.

Take a deep breath, attack the tone and gradually expand it on the palate and cheeks. The expansion should never be felt in the throat. Never

expand the tone, by pressing down or raising the shoulders. A gentle raising of the body will help the gradual expansion. Placing the weight of the body on the ball of the forward foot will give an elasticity to the body and to the phrase.

Execute the first arpeggio note with a full tone.

Take a deep breath and attack *pp* (pianissimo) mezzo-voce—the notes *E G D C B*, like singing on the surface of the breath, but with the same position of the full voice put a *trifle back*, then coming in front again with a full voice from the A-flat to the end.

Many exercises for different principles could be given, but this book is not a vocal method but only a kind of a practical guide, a study of human nature, contrived with sane explanation regarding the natural phenomena in singing, presented to enlist the attention of those who have a confused or wrong conception of long-established principles sometimes misrepresented or misunderstood in instruction, and which teachers of the older Italian School of Singing considered of paramount importance.

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